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ABSTRACT

This is a collection of four papers presented at a symposium examining ways in which needs data might be used in decisions about materials development, instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and administrative practices. The issues raised are based on some preliminary experience at the University of Mid-America (UMA) in conducting and seeking to utilize particular kinds of needs assessment data. The introductory paper is aimed at some of the conceptual issues relating to the ideas of needs data as a basis for course development, or need-based curriculum making. The second paper outlines attempts made by UMA to gather data to guide its curriculum decision-making process. The third paper describes procedures utilized to gather information from a number of communities in the state of Nebraska, concerning the needs and interests of the people who would be interested in enrolling in a course in Cultural History of the Great Plains. The final paper summarizes the way in which those needs assessment data were used (or not used) by content specialists, instructional developers, and evaluators working on the Cultural History course. (Author/DAG)

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RHETORIC AND PRACTICE:
NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN A
MAJOR DEVELOPMENT EFFORT

Working Paper No. 5

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PREFACE

During 1974, and early in 1975, staff members of the Office of Research and Evaluation, University of Mid-America, sought to think about the concept of needs assessment, with an emphasis on understanding how needs data might be used in course development, curriculum planning, and policy making. During the summer of 1974, a form of needs assessment was conducted in support of a course team working on a course in the Cultural History of the Great Plains. It seemed like an excellent opportunity to make some initial inquiries into the use of needs assessment techniques and data.

A proposal was submitted to the Program Committee for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, to present our findings on this topic. The proposal was approved, and we took the opportunity to gather together a variety of ideas about needs assessment.

This Working Paper contains the four papers presented at AERA. Hopefully, the papers shed some light on both the rhetoric and practice of needs assessment in a major development effort.

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IS THERE A NEED FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

Dennis D. Gooler
University of Nebraska

Introduction

This symposium* is directed at the question of whether or how people use needs assessment data in making decisions about curricula in general, and about materials development, instructional strategies, assessment strategies, or administrative practices specifically. Put more positively, the symposium is aimed at examining ways in which needs data might be used in some of those decisions. Discussion of this issue will proceed based on some preliminary experience at the State University of Nebraska in conducting and seeking to utilize particular kinds of needs assessment data.

The State University of Nebraska (SUN), and, more recently, the University of Mid-America (UMA) is a newly created postsecondary education system for adults. UMA is presently developing an academic plan which calls for the creation and/or adaptation of some fifty courses during the next five years. Adults throughout a number of midwestern states will be able to avail themselves of these courses, either for the purpose of obtaining college credit toward a degree, or for enriching their interests and expanding personal experiences. Because of its multimedia approach and delivery system, UMA enables adults to do most of this coursework in their homes. It is thus anticipated that the state delivery systems associated with UMA (in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska) will reach many

* Introductory paper given at a symposium, "Rhetoric and Practice: Needs Assessment in a Major Development Effort." 1975 AERA Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. This paper is best considered as part of the overall symposium package.

people who were not able to previously partake of existing postsecondary institutional offerings. Two courses were offered by SUN for the first time in the fall of 1974, with two more courses slated to begin in March 1975. Approximately 700 people in Nebraska enrolled for these two courses in 1974.

A central tenet in the philosophy of UMA is that its courses should be oriented to meet the interests and educational needs of its potential audiences. It is felt that the courses must be flexible enough to accomodate divergent adult audiences, such as high school students seeking advanced college credit, highly educated housewives, people whose college work has been interrupted, elderly people, and high school graduates in semi-professional employment seeking ways to improve themselves vocationally.

An essential first step in creating an educational program relevant to people's needs and concerns, it is argued, is to determine what those needs are. It is presumed that courses or other experiences can then be developed to meet those needs. Such a presumption prompts this symposium: under what conditions can development proceed from appraisals of need?

This introductory paper is aimed at some of the conceptual issues relating to the idea of needs data as a basis for course development, or need-based curriculum making. Rather, the paper seeks to briefly portray some specific issues or concerns about needs assessment that have been raised in the context of UMA course development efforts. Other papers in the symposium focus upon attempts made by UMA to do needs assessment, and what has happened with the resulting data.

This paper is organized about a number of decisions UMA or any open learning program must make relevant to its instructional efforts, that, ideally,

needs data might help to address. The point here is to portray the ideal. Before beginning that portrayal, however, it is important to set forth several observations on the idea of need.

Need and Needs Assessment

The dictionary defines need as "a lack of something requisite, desirable, or useful; a condition requiring supply or relief; to be in want." Much has been written about need, from a variety of perspectives: physiological needs, psychological needs, individual needs, national needs, international needs. While this paper does not represent an attempt to review all the literature pertinent to the concept of need, it may be useful for consideration of the issues in this symposium to describe at least one attempt to clarify the concept of need.

Bradshaw (1972) makes distinctions among four kinds of needs. The first, labeled normative need, has to do with the establishment by experts or peers of a "desirable standard," against which present status might be compared. For example, experts in nutrition might state recommended daily allowances of certain foods. A normative need exists if an individual is not getting at least the recommended allowance of a certain food. The standards so important to the concept of normative need are most often established by experts or groups of which an individual is not necessarily a part. The standards may be empirically or experimentally derived, or may be reflections of the value positions of the group or individual setting the standard. In any case, if the standard is not met, a need exists.

A second kind of need is described by Bradshaw as a felt need. This kind of need is most closely associated with a want: I need a vacation, I need a job with greater status, etc. A felt need may be closely associated

with a normative need, but not necessarily. Individuals may want some things which are not dictated nor regulated by others.

A third kind of need is labeled expressed need. Basically, an expressed need is a felt need turned into action to alleviate that need. Expressed needs may be inferred from the actions of people, particularly from the services they demand. One of the difficulties with this kind of need is that action might be interpreted as fulfilling various kinds of needs, thus often precluding accurate interpretation of just what felt need is being addressed by a particular action.

Finally, there is comparative need. Comparative needs are a function of the comparison of similar people with respect to receipt of a service. If a certain segment of the population receives some kind of service, say, access to mass transportation, while other similar segments of the population do not receive that service, then, by comparison, the groups not receiving the service have a need.

These kinds of needs, while interestingly different, appear to share some characteristics in common. First, each kind of need presupposes the existence of an ideal or standard. Standards derive from various sources, such as empirical evidence, experience, values, or mandates. Second, in each case, need itself is a discrepancy between the actual and ideal, between status and standard. A discrepancy view of need is very prevalent in education.

Many educators regard the elimination of need as a primary function of education. Some argue that the focal point of education must be the individual and his or her stated needs (felt needs), while others view society as an organized body of knowledge which every individual needs to be taught (normative need). Still others regard education as a social tool designed to

eradicate as fully as possible inequalities in opportunities and benefits (comparative need). Some educators have argued that effective education is that which enables individuals to act out their needs and desires (expressed need).

Thus, the concept of need is closely linked to philosophies of education, and, as such, presumably plays a key role in deliberations about the nature of educational processes. Most educational deliberations are influenced by informal needs assessments, conducted routinely and often unconsciously by people concerned about education either as consumers or suppliers. Judgments about what is needed are woven into the value structures of all of us.

Less often, portrayals of need are sought through more formal procedures, called needs assessments. There have been numerous needs assessment efforts undertaken, on behalf of many kinds of agencies and institutions. In commercial ventures, these assessments are often called market surveys. In education, the terms needs assessment or needs analysis are most commonly used. These assessments utilize a variety of techniques in seeking information about needs. This symposium, for example, contains descriptions of several of these techniques. The techniques discussed here involve asking an individual to describe his or her own "felt" needs. It should be pointed out, however, that other sources exist for determining an individual's needs: other people might be asked to describe those needs, behaviors might be observed, etc.

Given this general background to the idea of need and needs assessment, it is appropriate to identify, from an ideal perspective, some ways in which needs data could be used in decision-making in an open learning program or, for that matter, any educational program.

Needs Data and Decision Making

Global decisions

New efforts in education, or revamped editions of earlier efforts, presumably develop in response to observed or declared needs. It is reasonable to suppose, for example, that a major new effort in postsecondary education, such as UMA, gets underway after some determination has been made that changes in the social system have resulted in a need for this new educational service, or that old services presently available are simply not doing an adequate job in meeting some specified need.

At the most global level, then, needs data may be instrumental in decisions about what kinds of educational services will be provided, and to whom. Theoretically, new services would not be developed in the absence of a demand for that service; demand is a function of need (expressed). If one wants to know what services to provide, and, subsequently, what priorities ought to be given potential services, careful assessment of needs should be done.

The antithesis of needs-based decision making might be characterized as an individual or agency having an answer (or a service), while searching for a problem (or a need) to which the answer applies. While many people would argue that such an approach to planning is undesirable, there are numerous examples of programs being launched in the face of very difficult-to-discern problems or needs. Not all social programs ought to originate in response to a stated or obvious need--sometimes preventive or future programming makes most sense. But in many cases, careful analysis of needs will yield more thoughtful planning decisions.

Curriculum Decisions

Once a need for a program such as UMA is identified, decisions have to be made, still at a relatively general level, about what that program will actually feature, such as what courses or other experiences will be developed, and what curricular rationale will underly developmental efforts.

Here again, needs data might ideally enter the picture. If it has been established that a need exists to provide postsecondary educational opportunities for people who presently do not have those opportunities, what specific courses or experiences should be made available? What do people want or need with respect to coursework? What pressures are operating on people leading them to want to take certain kinds of postsecondary courses? Would they prefer courses in a business subject, or in the physical sciences? Do they need courses for credit or for non-credit? Do they wish a liberal arts curriculum to follow, or do they wish a professional curriculum?

A curriculum encompasses more than a random selection of courses. Curriculum implies some ordering of those courses, according to conceptions of what constitutes meaningful and relevant education. Presumably, needs data would be useful in assisting decision makers to formulate a rationale for pursuing a particular kind of curriculum. To be sure, individual courses can be developed without careful attention to curriculum. If this is done, however, it is the learner who may ultimately suffer, for if he finds that the collection of courses he has taken does not add up to anything appropriate in the aggregate, he will have lost something.

The kind of learner population to which UMA addresses itself presents particularly interesting problems in terms of curriculum decisions. While

the evidence is not entirely clear on this point as yet, it appears that it is one thing to think about a curriculum appropriate for individuals in their late teens or early twenties, and quite another to think about curriculum for adults in their late thirties or mid forties. Needs assessments could prove very useful in understanding the complex and multiple reasons why adults wish to engage in postsecondary education, and may provide some excellent hints as to the kinds of curricula which would make most sense for those adults. There are many curricula which might be developed; resources will not permit development of all possible kinds. Since choices must be made, those choices might be informed by certain needs data.

Content

Once a decision has been made to develop a course in a particular area, it remains to define the specific content that will be included in that course. Here again, needs data may be useful in making decisions about content.

Many professionals argue that the content for a given course is exclusively a function of the structure of the discipline from which the content comes. There is a long-standing tension between content selected primarily for its fit with the discipline, and content selected primarily for appeal to the interests, abilities, and needs of the learner. It is probably true that, in most cases, a combination of attention to content as defined by discipline, and attention to the relevancy of content as defined by a learner, is in order.

Content decisions for different kinds of courses will be influenced to varying degrees by needs data. Some courses deal with content that is very prescribed. It would be undesirable, for example, for an individual training to be a pilot to be able to decide for himself what content he will study

in preparing to pilot an aircraft. In other areas, however, details of what constitutes a discipline or body of knowledge do not appear to be quite as specific. This may be especially true in attempts to develop interdisciplinary courses.

The experience in UMA thus far is somewhat mixed with respect to the selection of content. In some courses, such as Accounting, there was general consensus on what content ought to be included in the course. In other areas, however, such as the course in the Cultural History of the Great Plains, there is less consensus about what content ought to be included. This course seems uniquely concerned with where people are, and what they want to know about themselves and their culture. Needs assessment data may be particularly useful in selecting content for a course such as this.

Instructional Strategies

It is an old and tired cliché which says that different people learn in different ways. The concept of individualized instruction is based on determinations of what a student needs, although much of the work in individualized instruction has proceeded on the basis of what appears to be (determined by experts) normative needs.

The concept of individual learning differences is especially interesting when applied to an adult learner population. The range of experiences of people at age 40 varies much more than the range of experiences of the 18 year old age cohort. Thus, it seems essential to develop instruction in such a way that learners can select alternative paths to their educational goals. The determination of what kinds of instructional alternatives to make available ought to be informed by careful needs data. Once again, there are finite

resources, and decisions have to be made about how many and which instructional alternatives are to be made available to learners. Presumably, needs assessment data will help to identify categories of learning preferences or styles, which might account for most differences in the adult learner population.

It may be the case, as many argue, that adults are basically unable to describe how they learn best. The concept of expressed need may be most relevant here: give people a variety of choices, observe what they choose to do, and infer their needs for particular instructional strategies from that action. Possibly a combination of needs assessments may be in order in which adults have both an opportunity to try to verbally describe how they learn best, and an opportunity to actually select from a number of strategies, with concurrent observation of those selections.

Of particular interest is the idea of media selection. It has been argued that it is possible to identify media which are more suitable for some learners than to others. Some people, for example, need to see things visually. Others seem to learn best through an audio presentation. Still others seem to function best with a print medium.

Need for Feedback

One of the most interesting aspects of an adult postsecondary education program concerns how to provide feedback on performance to the adult. Many of these people have been out of formal schooling for many years, and have developed certain anxieties about performing well in a college experience. Much of that anxiety centers about test taking.

Needs data might be collected on how people would prefer to obtain feedback on their performance in a postsecondary education experience. For example,

some adults may wish to be graded in a normative sense, much as a student in an on-campus course might be. That adult wants to know if he or she is able to successfully compete with other students.

Other adults, however, are more interested in simply knowing whether they have mastered a specific skill or topic, irregardless of how other people perform in the same area. These people are interested in criterion information. The feedback given to such students may need to be quite different than for those students interested in their relative performance.

The issue becomes more complex when performances are measured in ways other than the usual kind of testing procedures. For example, in the Cultural History of the Great Plains course, it is planned that students will complete projects. These projects will vary from developing an oral history, to preparing a photographic exhibition, to writing a term paper, etc. Different techniques will need to be employed to evaluate these efforts, and feedback will need to be given to students in various ways. A form of needs assessment might be conducted in an effort to determine what students feel they need to know about their work on projects such as this, and how they would like this information given to them.

The validity of development efforts

At the most global level, needs data may be useful in making decisions about whether a particular kind of educational service is needed, and what the general nature of that service ought to be. Once a global decision has been made, the details of that decision, in this case the nature of a curriculum to be developed, must be specified. That decision may also be informed by collection of needs data. At more finite levels, needs data may help address

issues such as selection of content, the design of instructional strategies, and systems for providing feedback to learners. In an ideal sense, then, carefully gathered needs assessment data would be useful in all those settings.

Needs data may also be used as a checkpoint once all these decisions have been made. That is, it may be important to go back and review data about learner needs, and ask the question as to whether the product, once it is finally completed, does indeed deal with those needs. This verifying or validating activity is extraordinarily important. It is so easy to get caught up in developing and delivering a course, that one often fails to ask whether that course or that delivery, once completed, resulted in anything relevant to the needs which it started out to address. Since there are many decisions to be made in the course development process, there are multiple opportunities for things to end up different than when they began. Needs assessment data may thus be used as a means of verifying effort, to portray the extent to which that which was intended actually occurred.

The above paragraphs outline some of the kinds of decisions which must be made in an educational program like UMA is developing. Ideally, data collected about the needs of the intended participants in such a program could (and should) be of vital importance in making these decisions. There are different ways of defining need, and different ways of collecting information about those needs.

The difficulty, of course, lies with implementing the ideal. Curriculum decisions are not always made entirely rationally, nor should they necessarily always strive to be made entirely rationally. Seldom do we approach the ideal. What would be very interesting, of course, is to give the idea a fair chance.

Some Transition Thoughts

Consistent with the topic of the symposium, the author feels a need to make some final remarks about need, needs assessment, and program decision making. These closing remarks take the form of a caution concerning the "ideal" use of needs data as suggested above.

First, it is important to worry about priorities that might result from collection of needs data. The priority given to a particular need is often a function of the size of the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual. That is, where the discrepancy is largest, therein is the greatest need. This interpretation needs to be viewed with some caution. There may be instances in which a very small discrepancy between a status and a standard, or between the actual and an ideal, may be absolutely critical, and other cases where a large discrepancy can be tolerated. The importance of need does not seem to be merely a function of the magnitude of that need, expressed in terms of the gap between ideal and actual or the total number of people who have that need, but is also determined by the urgency (e.g., base physiological needs in Maslow's hierarchy) of the need.

A second caution: the assessment of needs may itself influence needs. That is, it is possible that many "needs" are taught. The act of asking a question teaches people things. In some respects, this caution has to do with the "happy native" concept. Some people may not be aware that they have needs, and thus, by some definitions, may not have those needs. Our questions may plant a need, which we subsequently measure. This is a very interesting and very delicate topic, which cannot be adequately dealt with here. The purpose of education to many is to teach people both that they have needs, or that they ought to have certain needs, and that they can

satisfy those needs. The caution is raised here only to remind the reader of parallel cautions made about measurement of any kind. Most measurements are obtrusive, they do act upon the environment being observed, and therefore some care must be taken in the interpretation of data resulting from those measurements.

The remainder of this symposium, then, moves from these very global issues, to much more specific studies of the actual conduct of needs assessments, and the ultimate utilization of data resulting from those assessments. In the next paper, Roger Sell outlines attempts made by UMA to gather data to guide its broad curriculum decision making process. Following that paper, Dave Forman describes procedures utilized to gather information from a number of communities in the state of Nebraska, concerning the needs and interests of people in those communities for a course in Cultural History of the Great Plains. Following Dave's presentation, Penny Richardson, Rick Lent, and Jane Cashell summarize the way in which those needs assessment data were used (or not used) by content specialists, instructional developers, and evaluators working on the Cultural History course.

It is important to point out that the needs assessment efforts conducted on the behalf of the Cultural History course were done very early in the conception of the course, and were furthermore conducted as part of an overall planning process for the course. No attempt is made to argue that the needs assessment process as described was either comprehensive or definitive. Nonetheless, we believe there are some lessons to be learned from this attempt, and we shall seek to share what we have learned in this symposium.

Reference

Bradshaw, J. "The Concept of Social Need," Ekistics 220, March 1974, pp 184-187.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN THE BROAD CONTENT
OF AN OPENING LEARNING PROGRAM

G. Roger Sell

This paper is part of a symposium, "Rhetoric and Practice: Needs Assessment in a Major Development Effort," given at the 1975 AERA Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. This paper is best considered as part of the overall symposium package.

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN THE BROAD
CONTENT OF AN OPEN LEARNING PROGRAM

G. Roger Sell
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Introduction

The purpose of this symposium is to paint a picture of both the rhetoric and the reality of needs assessment, as it pertains to a major developmental effort in American postsecondary education. The developmental effort which I refer to is the University of Mid-America.

The University of Mid-America (UMA) is a regional open learning program which aims to create and experiment with a variety of learning activities designed primarily for adults who have not had access to or who are reluctant to take advantage of traditional postsecondary educational programs.¹ UMA is governed and administered presently by a consortium of five universities in the Midwest (Missouri, Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State, and Nebraska). As a regional educational program, UMA has three principal responsibilities: development of high-quality, relevant educational materials which can be delivered to adults in ways which break down existing barriers to lifelong learning, research into the adult learner and evaluation of adult learning in UMA-produced courses, and assistance to states in their development of open learning delivery systems.

The first of the statewide delivery systems to become operational was the State University of Nebraska, or SUN, where research and development activities in the open learning concept began in 1971. In the fall of 1974, SUN offered on a pilot basis the first two courses produced under the UMA concept, in which teams of content experts, instructional developers, researchers, producers, and writers combine their talents.

At the present time, UMA has prepared a preliminary statement of its mission,² has outlined a curricular philosophy,³ and has identified a list of courses to

be considered for acquisition and/or development over the next five years. A central belief of UMA is that its courses should be oriented to meet the educational needs of its audience.

One essential component in developing an educational program which is relevant to people's needs is to determine what those needs are, and how they can be satisfied. As my part in this symposium, I will attempt to describe a market survey approach to needs assessment, to review results of market surveys conducted between 1972 and 1974, and to draw tentative conclusions about the use of market survey information for making program decisions about curriculum development and course selection.

The Market Model and Open Learning

Marketing has been described by Trivett (1974, p. 3) as:

...the concept of uncovering specific needs, satisfying these needs by the development of appropriate goods and services, letting people know of their availability, and offering them at appropriate prices, at the right time and place...

Marketing, thus conceived, is directed at identifying the needs of specific clientele for the purposes of (a) selecting products (goods and services) to develop, (b) advising potential clients of the availability of particular products, and (c) delivering products at the optimum price, time, and location.

The marketing concept has been applied most frequently by the non-educational sector, especially by business. However, an increasing number of educational institutions, amidst enrollment crises, are adopting aspects of the market model for modifying existing programs and initiating new programs (Trivett, 1974). A main thrust of some college and universities is the use of marketing techniques for reaching a new clientele, who are described as (Report from the Presidential Committee on New Market Students, 1973, p. 3):

minority group persons, housewives, veterans, blue collar workers, elderly and retired persons, and college and high school dropouts. Though some of these persons are in the 18-25 year age range, the great majority are over 25, and consequently, will require a variety of new learning options, rather than the mere extension of existing programs designed with younger students in mind.

The marketing approach to postsecondary education seems ideally suited for an open learning program. Open learning programs, like UMA/SUN, advocate reaching a clientele (who is not served by existing programs) with educational experiences which are pertinent, flexible, and accessible. What educational experiences to provide, how, where, and to whom are questions which market surveys could help to answer.

The notion of a market model of educational research and development has been developed most carefully by Gideonse (1972). Gideonse argues (p. 21):

Educational research and development must be conceived in terms of the market, consumers, and clients it is supposed to serve. Only after that principle is firmly established should attention be directed to the processes, techniques, and functions which might accomplish that service.

Prerequisite to the application of science to education is the examination and redefinition of what the education market is, what it means to consider clients or practitioners as a "market," and how to translate market requirements into product or outcome statements that will provide useful guidance to the development and management of research and development policies and practices. Successful innovations derived through research and development are more likely to arise from careful consideration of market requirements or possibilities than from the theoretical and technical possibilities emergent from R&D by itself.⁴

Gideonse's belief in a market model of educational research and development stems, in part, from the literature on innovations and growth industries, and, in part, from the information needs for policy development and decision making. Citing the work of Myers and Marquis (1969), Gideonse maintains that "recognition of demand is a more frequent factor in innovation than recognition of technical potential" (p. 21). An extension of this same idea is found in Levitt (1960), who concluded that healthy (growing) industries see their primary role as customer-satisfying rather than goods-producing (Gideonse, 1972, pp. 22-23):

An industry begins with the customer and his needs, not with a patent, a raw material, or a selling skill. Given the customer's needs, the industry develops backwards, first concerning itself with the physical delivery of customer satisfaction. Then it moves back further to creating the things by which these satisfactions are in part achieved...Finally, the industry moves back still further to finding the raw materials necessary for making its products.

The important point brought out by Gideonse is that "those industries that have maintained a posture of satisfying customers have thrived; those that have concentrated on producing goods have either stabilized or gotten into serious difficulty" (p. 23).

In summary, the market model raises three fundamental questions about needs assessment for an open learning program: Who is the market? What are the needs of the market? and, How is information about the needs of the market used? The remainder of this paper is organized around these three questions.

Who Is the Market for Open Learning?

The rhetoric of UMA/SUN indicates that the market for its open learning program is a diverse population of adults who do not find postsecondary education accessible to them. The diverse population would include high school students who want to try their hand at college-level courses, homemakers, elderly people, the handicapped, high school graduates who wish to work while studying at home, high school or college dropouts who wish college-level experiences, and professional and para-professional people who desire retraining or continuing education.

Over the past three years, four market surveys have been conducted to describe the potential learner market for a SUN-type program. The commonality among these market surveys is that they have tried to assess the "needs" of learners as described by the learners themselves; a difference among these market surveys is that they involved different samples of the adult population.

Two market surveys of adults in the State of Nebraska have been undertaken. Ross, Brown, and Hassel (1972) used phone interviews, mail questionnaires, and questionnaires administered in person to gauge the interests of high school students (N=2,064) and adults (N=1,649) in a SUN-type program. During the summer of 1974, another market survey was conducted to provide greater clarity about the needs of potential learners. The survey used three forms of a mail questionnaire (see Appendix A) sent to 1600 residents in the State of Nebraska. The sample of 1600 was drawn from names in telephone books from across the state. One hundred fifty-six useable forms were returned from this sample. A third market survey was conducted by Central Surveys, Inc. (1973) with a sample of 1,250 adult residents in Omaha (Nebraska), Madison (Wisconsin), Colorado Springs (Colorado), Fort Wayne (Indiana), and Peoria (Illinois). Personal interviews were conducted to determine the extent and kind of interest in adult education activities. A fourth market survey (Flinn, 1973) employed mail questionnaires

returned by 3,826 homemakers and husbands in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Maryland (Baltimore), and Oregon (Portland). Over the three year period, almost 9,000 respondents were included in the four market surveys.

In addition to the four market surveys of potential learners, one study is underway to describe the characteristics (profile) of those who actually enrolled in the first two course offerings by SUN. A Student Information Questionnaire (see Appendix B) was completed by 60% of the students enrolled in Accounting I and Introductory Psychology, which were first offered by SUN in the fall of 1974. Highlights of the four market surveys of potential learners, and the study of learners actually enrolled with SUN, are reported in this and the following section.⁵ To establish a footing for the presentation and discussion of data, the classic adult learner study by Johnstone and Rivera (1965) will be employed as a "baseline" for interpreting the results of market surveys and learner profiles.

Johnstone and Rivera (1965, pp. 1-2) estimated that about 22% of American adults had been active in an educational activity during 1961-62,⁶ and that 61% of the adults they interviewed had been enrolled in some form of learning activity at some time in their adult lives. Of those adults participating in an educational activity during 1961-62, about 8% were enrolled as full-time students, about 60% were enrolled in courses on a part-time basis, and about 32% were enrolled in independent study.

How large is the potential market for programs of adult learning?⁷

Johnstone and Rivera (1962, p. 15) found that (1) about 44% of their sample were both interested in learning and favorably disposed toward taking courses, (2) about 26% of their sample were interested in learning but not prepared to take courses, and (3) about 29% of their sample were uninterested in learning anything new at all. Johnstone and Rivera concluded that "as many as seven adults in ten may have interests that could conceivably lead them into some kind of learning

situation, but that less than one-half of the population could be seriously regarded as potential adult education participants" (p. 15).

How large is the potential market for an open learning program like UMA/SUN? Although this question cannot be fully answered through the market survey information available, several indications of the interest of potential learners are available. Brown (1974) found, using phone surveys, mail questionnaires, and personal questionnaires in Nebraska, that 69% of the high school students (N=2,064) and 68% of the adults (N=1,649) in his sample felt that someone could learn as much in a multi-media approach as in a regular classroom, that 90% of both high school students and adults would recommend an open learning program to people they knew who might be capable of handling college work, and 47% of the high school students and 15% of the adults thought someone in their immediate family might be interested in a course available through a program like SUN. Flinn (1973) used a mail questionnaire in a second survey covering six geographic areas of the country--Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Baltimore, and Portland--and found that 1.4% to 2.8% (N=3,826) of the people in the sample indicated they were very interested in a SUN-type educational program, and that 10% to 16% indicated they were very interested in general adult education. Respondents to this survey included homemakers, husbands, and children.

Central Surveys, Inc. (1973) conducted a third market survey on behalf of SUN. This survey was conducted in five cities in the Midwest--Omaha, Madison, Colorado Springs, Fort Wayne, and Peoria--using an interview technique. A total of 1,250 interviews were conducted with adult residents, and one finding was that 97 respondents (or 7.8%) of the total survey sample appeared to be most likely to take advantage of a SUN-like program, should that program be available.

The 1974 UMA Office of Research and Evaluation survey of a sample of 1600 persons from telephone books across the State of Nebraska included the following

question: "Do you think you will participate in some type of academic course work in the next five years?" Although this question is not specifically directed toward a SUN-type program, the responses are indicative of participation in continuing education. The distribution of the various alternatives are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Likelihood of Participation in Academic Course Work in the Next Five Years.*

Response	Percent Responding Sample (N=56)
Yes, I'm quite sure	25%
Yes, I probably will	25%
I can't say one way or another	27%
No, I probably won't	21%
No, I won't	2%
Total	100%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

While only one person out of the 56 in the sample indicated that they wouldn't participate in any type of course work in the next five years, the responses were evenly distributed over the remaining items ranging from "No, I probably won't" to "Yes, I'm quite sure," with approximately half of the sample indicating they would at least probably participate.

The findings from the UMA/SUN market surveys regarding the size of the market for adult education programs tend to support the findings of Johnstone and Rivera (1965). However, the size of the potential UMA/SUN market in the Midwest appears to be considerably smaller than that for adult education programs

in general. The potential size of the UMA/SUN market in the Midwest, it would appear, is between 2% and 8% of the adult population.⁸

What types of adults participate in educational activities? Johnstone and Rivera found (p. 6) that participants in adult education could be distinguished from nonparticipants with three factors: age, amount of formal schooling and place of residence. Adult education participants in the Johnstone and Rivera study were younger than the median age of their national sample (36.5 years to 42.5 years), one-half were under 40, four-fifths were under 50, and the rate of participation fell with age. The participants were better educated than all adults in their sample (12.2 years of schooling vs. 11.5 years of schooling), and 47% of those with more than 16 years of schooling participated compared with only 4% of those with no formal schooling. Residents of large metropolitan areas participated to a greater extent than residents of small cities, small towns, or rural areas. The participants were about equally divided among men and women.

Flinn (1973) found that above average interest for participating in a SUN-like program was expressed by people who have taken some other study programs, who live in towns 2,500 to 49,000 people, who are employed part-time, and women ages 40-49.

Who has actually enrolled as participants in the SUN program? The learners who enrolled in the first two SUN-offered courses can be described in relation to the 1974 UMA market survey respondents according to age, sex, highest level of education completed, marital and family status and geographical location. Table 2 shows the age distribution of learners enrolled in the first two SUN course offerings, in relation to the respondents who completed the UMA market survey and the general adult population of Nebraska.

Table 2

Age Distribution of Learners Enrolled in SUN's First Two Course Offerings, Potential Learners in UMA's 1974 Market Survey, and the Adult Population of Nebraska.*

Age	Percent of Learners Enrolled in SUN Courses (N=612)	Percent of Potential Learners in UMA Survey (N=156)	Percent of Adult** Population of Nebraska (N= 900,000)
Under 20	2%	1%	--
20-34	36%	34%	31%
35-49	40%	40%	26%
50-64	19%	18%	23%
Over 64	3%	6%	20%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975)

**Adult population refers to all persons over age 19. Source: Nebraska Blue Book, 1972.

When comparing the age distribution of the learners who enrolled in the first two SUN course offerings with the age distributions of potential learners who completed the 1974 UMA market survey, the results are remarkably similar. However, when comparing the age distributions of the learners who enrolled in the first two SUN courses with the age distributions of the adult populations of Nebraska, a disproportionately high percentage of the 35-49 age group and a disproportionately low percentage of the over 65 age group enrolled in SUN courses. It also should be noted that few high school students enrolled in the first two SUN courses, that almost as many in the 20-34 age group enrolled as in the 35-49 age group, and that almost one of every five enrollments were in the 50-64 age group. The age range of all learners enrolled in the first two SUN courses was 13-70, and distributed across all age groups.

A second comparison of those who completed the UMA market survey and those who enrolled in SUN courses is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Distribution of Sexes in SUN-enrolled Learners
and in the Respondents to the 1974 UMA Market Survey.*

Sex	Percentage of Learners Enrolled in SUN Courses (N=612)	Percentage of Potential Learners * in UMA Market Survey (N=156)
Male	21%	70%
Female	79%	30%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

Two kinds of sex bias are apparent in Table 3. First, almost four out of five learners who enrolled in the first two SUN courses are female. The sex bias of those who enrolled in the two SUN courses is a phenomenon which needs close scrutiny regarding SUN's potential population. Second, seven out of ten potential learners who responded to the UMA market survey are male. This latter sex bias resulted apparently from the use of names in telephone books as the basis for sampling in the UMA market survey. Most names listed were in the male gender. Given the sex differences between enrollees in SUN courses and respondents to the UMA market survey, care must be exercised in drawing inferences from the market survey about those who enrolled in the first two SUN courses.

Table 4 compares the educational attainment among learners enrolled in SUN courses, potential learners who completed the UMA market survey, and the adult population of Nebraska.

Table 4

Distribution of Educational Attainment of Learner's Enrolled in SUN's First Two Courses, Potential Learners in UMA's 1974 Market Survey, and the Adult Population of Nebraska.*

Educational Attainment	Percent of Learners Enrolled in SUN Courses (N=612)	Percent of Potential Learners in UMA Survey (N=156)	Percent of Adult** Population of Nebraska (N= 919,899)
11th grade or less	5%	5%	41%
High School	43%	21%	59%
Trade, Business School	14%	10%	
1-3 Years of College	27%	26%	
College Graduate	6%	19%	
Graduate Degree	4%	19%	

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**Adult refers to all those 25 or over. The 59% refers to all those adults who attained at least a high school diploma. Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1974.

When comparing the educational attainment of learners enrolled in the first two SUN courses with potential learners who completed the UMA market survey, 64% of those who completed the UMA market survey had some form of college education while 37% of those enrolled in SUN courses reported some form of college education. On the basis of these data, it can be concluded that the UMA market survey respondents were more highly educated than the learners who enrolled in the first two SUN courses. However, it should be noted that only 5% of the UMA market survey respondents and the SUN course enrollees reported themselves as a "high school dropout," i.e., eleventh grade education or less, while 41% of the Nebraska adult population have reportedly less than a high school education. About one out of four UMA survey respondents, as well as SUN course enrollees, reported themselves to be "college dropouts," i.e., 1-3 years of college education.

Table 5 compares the marital and family status of the learners enrolled in the first two SUN courses with the respondents to the UMA market survey.

Table 5

Marital and Family Status of Learners Enrolled
in SUN's First Two Courses and Potential Learners
in UMA's 1974 Market Survey.*

Marital and Family Status	Percent of Learners Enrolled in SUN Courses (N=612)**	Percent of Potential in UMA Market Survey (N=156)
Single	11%	11%
Married, no children	13%	11%
Married, mostly young children	31%	37%
Married, mostly grown children	39%	31%
Widowed, Divorced, or Separated	6%	9%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975)

**Based on data from 60% (367) of learners enrolled in SUN's first two courses.

The pattern of marital and family status is very similar between learners who enrolled in SUN's first two courses and respondents to UMA's market survey, with about 88% married and with children.

The place of residence of learners enrolled in the SUN program, of respondents to the UMA market survey, and of the Nebraska population is shown in

Table 6.

Table 6

Population Center Distribution of Learners Enrolled in SUN's First Two Courses, of Potential Learners in UMA's 1974 Market Survey, and Nebraska's Residents.*

Population of Residence Area	Percent of Learners Enrolled in SUN Courses** (N=612)	Percent of Potential Learners in UMA Survey (N=156)	Percent of Nebraska's Population*** (N=1,483,000)
Rural/Farm	22%	14%	22%
Small Town (2,000 or less)	18%	17%	15%
Medium Town (2,000-10,000)	15%	14%	13%
Larger Town (10,000-20,000)	10%	2%	11%
City (over 20,000)	36%	53%	35%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**Based on data from 60% (367) of learners enrolled in SUN's first two courses.

***Source: Nebraska Blue Book, 1972.

The distribution of learners enrolled in SUN's first two courses in terms of population centers is remarkably similar to that of the Nebraska population. However, a disproportionately higher percentage of respondents to the UMA market survey lived in cities, when compared to learners actually enrolled in SUN. Conversely, a disproportionately lower percentage of respondents to the UMA market survey lived in rural areas/farms and in larger towns, when compared to learners actually enrolled in SUN. These data suggest another caution in drawing inferences from the UMA market survey for the SUN enrollees.

Two additional sets of data may help to describe the learners who enrolled in the first two SUN courses. The enrollees were asked to respond to the following question on the Student Information Questionnaire: "How many years in total have you resided in Nebraska? (mark one)." The responses to this item are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Total Years Resided in Nebraska by
Learners Enrolled in SUN's First Two Courses

Total Years Resided in Nebraska	Percent*
Less than 1 year	4%
1-5 years	5%
6-10 years	3%
11 or more years	88%

*N=367, or 60% of SUN learners enrolled in the first two courses.

Almost nine out of ten SUN learners who completed the Student Information Questionnaire appear to be native Nebraskans, i.e., living in Nebraska 11 or more years.

Finally, SUN learners were asked on the Student Information Questionnaire: "How many years has it been since you last participated in a formal educational experience?" The alternative responses to this item and the results appear as Table 8.

Table 8

Years Since Last Participation in a Formal Educational
Experience by Learners Enrolled in SUN's First Two Courses

Years Since Participation in Formal Educational Experience	Percent*
Within past year	15%
Between 1-2 years ago	10%
Between 3-5 years ago	12%
5 years or more ago	63%

*N=367, or 60% of SUN learners enrolled in the first two courses.

Better than six out of ten enrollees who completed the Student Information Questionnaire reported that it had been five years or more since they had last participated in a formal educational experience.

What Are the Needs of the Market for Open Learning?

Given a pluralistic market, both present and potential, how does an open learning program go about identifying educational needs which it will attempt to meet?

Knowles has argued (1970, p. 23):

There are three sources of needs and interests that must be considered in adult-education-program planning: (1) "those of the individual to be served, (2) those of the sponsoring organization or institution, and (3) those of the community or society at large.

The treatment of educational needs in this section will focus on the individuals to be served, as represented through responses to UMA/SUN market surveys conducted to date, as well as findings from the Johnstone and Rivera study (1965).

1. For what reasons would/do adults take courses? Flinn (1973) found that about half of those people who expressed an interest in the SUN-type program (N=56) wanted to participate for college credit. While the idea of easier learning and freedom from college campus involvement were reflected in "likes" about the program, the respondents indicated some wariness in terms of their capabilities of handling a home study program. Table 9 summarizes the findings from this aspect of the Flinn (1973) survey.

Table 9

Reasons for Taking a SUN-like Course,
by Respondents "Very likely" to Participate
in Such a Course (N=56)*

Reason for Participation	Percent of Sample Selecting Reason
College credit	54%
Personal fulfillment	32%
General knowledge	30%
Job advancements	29%
Home management	5%

*Adapted from Flinn (1973).

Central Surveys, Inc. (1973) found that, of those likely to participate in a SUN-type program, the most important reasons for wanting to take college courses were "to improve my mind generally," and "to help me grow in knowledge and understanding of the world we live in." Table 10 contains the results for both the total sample and the target group likely to enroll in SUN-type courses.

Table 10

Reasons for Wanting to Take College Courses*

Reason for Participation	Target Group (N=97)	Survey Sample (N=1250)
To improve my mind generally	67%	37%
To help me grow in knowledge and understanding of the world we live in	61%	30%
To have a new and interesting activity and use my spare time effectively	33%	24%
To help me qualify for a better job	32%	17%
To work toward a college degree	25%	11%
To help me do better in my present job	22%	12%
To help me get a job	7%	7%
To get a high school diploma	6%	5%
Don't know, no opinion	--	1%
Not asked - not interested in the program	--	39%

*Adapted from Central Surveys, Inc. (1973).

The UMA Market Survey included the following question: "If you were to participate in an educational activity, what major reasons would there be for you to do so? (check all that apply)." Table 11 lists the alternatives in the order of their frequency of choice.

Table 11
Major Reasons for Participating In an Educational Activity*

Reason for Participation	Percent of Responding Sample Selecting Each Reason (N=50)
To increase my general knowledge	70%
To prepare me for a job or career improvement	56%
To increase my current level of schooling	54%
To satisfy my curiosity about a particular topic	43%
To become a better person or citizen	29%
To become a better friend, spouse or parent	17%
To spend my leisure time in a worthwhile way	17%
To help me get more out of a hobby or interest	13%
To get to know other adults	5%
Total	304%**

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**Total is more than 100% because each respondent chose an average of three items.

The most frequently chosen reasons for participating in an educational activity were perhaps the most traditional reasons, i.e., to learn more, to get ahead in a job, and to increase general level of schooling each of which was chosen by over half of the total sample. The next five most frequently chosen reasons were selected by from 13% to 43% of the total sample of 50 persons. These five choices could be related to reasons of personal development or of general self improvement, as opposed to the more typical academic goals.

The least frequently selected reason for participating in an educational activity was "To get to know other adults." Only 5% of the respondents chose this rather non-academic reason for continuing their education. It thus appears that the lack of social contact may not be a serious deterrent to continuing education in the home.

Johnstone and Rivera found in their study (pp. 11-12) that younger adults tended to take courses for job-centered reasons, older adults tended to take courses for general knowledge, and leisure-centered goals increased among men with age. They also found that, at all ages, men were concerned with vocational goals and women were more concerned with home, family life, and leisure-time interests. Finally, Johnstone and Rivera found (p. 11) that "women were also more likely to take courses to expand their social horizons or to get away from the daily routine."

Three items in the UMA Student Information Questionnaire provide a basis for indicating the reasons why learners enrolled in the SUN program. One item on the Questionnaire asked learners to respond to the following question: "How important is it that you achieve the following goals by studying with SUN? (please respond to each item)." Each goal was to be rated as "Not Important," "Somewhat Important," or "Very Important." The list of goal statements from the Questionnaire is presented in Table 12, in the order of importance ascribed to them by the learners, with "Not Important" given a value of "0," "Somewhat Important" given a value of "1," and "Very Important" given a value of "2." The average rating represents the arithmetic mean for all learners completing this item of the Questionnaire (N=367, or 60% of learners enrolled in the first two SUN courses).

Probably the most meaningful statistics in Table 12 are not the average ratings, but are rather the percentages of learners marking "Very Important" in each category. For instance, item "h" (To obtain a degree which is required for my present or future job) was the second from the last in terms of its average rating. However, 22% of learners completing the Questionnaire stated that this goal was very important to them, and another 22% said it was somewhat important. To disregard this goal because of a low overall average would be to disregard a goal that was very important to a significant portion of SUN learners.

Relative Importance of Student Goals for
Studying with SUN* (N=367).

Goal Statement	Percent of Students Checking Each Category			Average Rating
	Not Important (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	Very Important (2)	
1. Simply, to learn	6	17	77	1.71
e. To attain specific skills that will be useful on a job.	19	28	53	1.33
n. To increase my confidence to undertake learning projects.	21	31	48	1.27
k. To improve my self-image	20	38	42	1.23
f. To increase my awareness of different philosophies, cultures and ways of life.	27	37	36	1.09
g. To improve my chances of making more money	31	33	36	1.06
o. To use leisure time creatively.	32	35	33	1.00
i. To learn how to participate ef- fectively as a citizen in my community.	35	44	21	.87
m. To improve my professional status.	44	26	30	.86
j. To develop an understanding and an appreciation of science and technology.	37	43	20	.84
c. To develop a new career.	45	28	27	.81
b. To discover my vocational interests.	44	34	22	.77
a. To increase my appreciate of art, music, literature and other cultural expressions.	45	35	20	.75
h. To obtain a degree which is re- quired for my present or future job.	56	22	22	.67
d. To become involved in social and political concerns.	51	37	12	.61

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

Similar statements could be made about each of the above goals. The figures in Table 12 indicates that while some goals are held in greater esteem by larger segments of SUN learners than others, most of the goals are considered to be "Very Important" by at least 20% of the learners.

A following item on the Questionnaire asked learners to indicate which single goal statement was the most important to them. Seventy-seven percent of the SUN learners who completed the Questionnaire also completed this item. The results are shown in Table 13. For the purpose of clarity, the goals have been grouped into three clusters, each of which contains similar or related goals. The singular most important goal selected by SUN learners was "Simply, to learn." However, the group of goals which make up the Career Improvement Cluster were most often selected as most important. Again, the diversity of most important goals for studying with SUN should be noted.

Table 13

Most Important Student Goal for Studying with SUN (N=367).

Goal Cluster/Statement	Percent of Learners Selecting Goal as Most Important
<u>Career Improvement Cluster</u>	40%
---To attain specific skills that will be useful on the job (14%)	
---To develop a new career (8%)	
---To obtain a degree which is required for my present or future job (6%)	
---To improve my chances of making more money (4%)	
---To improve my professional status (4%)	
---To discover my vocational interests (4%)	
<u>Self Improvement Cluster</u>	34%
---Simply, to learn (22%)	
---To improve my self-image (6%)	
---To increase my confidence to undertake learning projects (5%)	
---To use leisure time creatively (1%)	
<u>Cultural Growth & Development Cluster</u>	13%
---To learn how to participate effectively as a citizen in my community (4%)	
---To increase my awareness of different philosophies, cultures, and ways of life (4%)	
---To increase my appreciation of art, music, literature, and other cultural expressions (3%)	
---To become involved in social and political concerns (1%)	
---To develop an understanding and an appreciation of science and technology (1%)	

A second item on the Student Information Questionnaire asked learners enrolled in the first two SUN courses: "What is the highest academic degree you hope to obtain? (check one)." The responses to this item appear in Table 14.

Table 14

Highest Academic Degree Student Hopes to Obtain* (N=367).

Degree Aspiration	Percent
None (No academic degree aspiration)	38%
Associate Degree	11%
Bachelor's Degree	30%
Master's Degree	8%
Doctor of Philosophy or Education	3%
Medical Degree (MD, DDS, etc.)	1%
Law Degree (LL.B., JD)	1%
Theological Degree	0%
Other	<u>8%</u>

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

Almost four out of ten SUN learners who completed the Questionnaire item reported that they did not have a degree objective; however, about the same number reported the objective of attaining either an Associate Degree or Bachelor's Degree.

A third item on the Student Information Questionnaire asked SUN learners: "Please indicate the importance of the following influences on your enrolling with SUN." Table 15 shows the results from SUN learners who completed this item, as well as the influence which most affected the learner's enrollment with SUN. The three most influential factors reported by learners who enrolled in SUN's

first two courses were: I wanted to live at home while attending college,"

"The independence allowed by SUN," and "I can work as well as study with SUN."

Table 15

Factors Influential in Students Enrollment With SUN

Most Influential Factor	Factor	Nearest Whole Percentage			Total
		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	
3%	The good reputation of the University of Nebraska	31%	29%	39%	99%
--	I have friends at SUN	2%	3%	95%	100%
--	Another SUN student recommended it	2%	3%	96%	100%
18%	The independence allowed by SUN	50%	19%	31%	100%
--	My employer suggested I take SUN courses	4%	3%	92%	99%
13%	I can work as well as study with SUN	42%	17%	42%	101%
1%	A counselor recommended SUN	3%	3%	93%	99%
4%	A member of my family suggested I enroll	7%	11%	82%	100%
23%	I wanted to live at home while attending college	38%	10%	52%	100%
15%	Other	8%	1%	92%	100%
77%					

* N=367, or 60% of learners enrolled in first two SUN courses.

2. What courses would/do adults prefer? Three of the market surveys specifically asked the respondents to identify their course preferences should they wish to enroll in a SUN-type program. Brown (1974) found that Accounting and Psychology appeared at the top of the list for both high school students and general adults. Table 16 summarizes the results from this item in the Brown survey.

Table 16

Course Preferences of High School Students and Adults*

	High School Students		General Adults	
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	1st Choice	2nd Choice
Art	14%	10%	8%	5%
Accounting	17%	15%	24%	13%
Biology	14%	12%	5%	4%
Philosophy	3%	7%	3%	6%
Physiology	3%	6%	--	9%
Psychology	16%	16%	16%	20%
Sociology	7%	19%	8%	23%
Others	26%	15%	37%	20%

*Adapted from Brown (1974).

Central Surveys, Inc. (1973) also found that Psychology and Accounting ranked among the top of the list of courses preferred by their sample. Table 17 shows the results obtained for the entire sample and the results obtained from the target group likely to enroll in a SUN-type program. The market survey undertaken by UMA (1975) included a number of items related to types of courses preferred. Table 18 shows the responses to the question: "Which of the following areas would be most important to you if you were to take part in an educational activity?"

Table 17

Preferences for Types of Courses Potentially
Offered Through SUN-like Educational Programs.*

Course	Target Group (N=97)	Survey Sample (N=1250)
Psychology	48%	22%
Mathematics	40%	19%
Art	37%	18%
Accounting	36%	19%
English	33%	18%
Sociology	33%	15%
History	27%	16%
Teaching methods	27%	14%
Music appreciation	24%	14%
Philosophy	22%	10%
Physiology	15%	6%
Biology	8%	6%
Don't know, nothing on the list		3%
Not asked - not interested in program		39%

*Adapted from Central Surveys, Inc. (1973)

Table 18

Relative Importance of Various Areas of Study*

Area of Importance	Percent of Responding Sample (N=50)
Trade, business or vocational subjects	48%
Hobbies, recreation and leisure	32%
Regular school subjects	28%
Home improvement and family living	18%
Public affairs and citizenship	18%
Agricultural subjects	18%
Youth leadership work	12%
Community development	8%
Total	182%**

* Adapted from Eggert (1975).

** Total percentage is over 100% because most respondents selected more than one area.

By far the most popular choice of this group of 50 respondents was for Trade, Business or Vocational Subjects, with almost half indicating that this type of course would be important to them. Regular School Subjects and Hobbies, Recreation and Leisure, were selected by 32% and 28% of the respondents, respectively, as being important. The greater popularity of the practical and the traditional suggested in Table 22 seems to be indicated in this table as well. That a third of this sample selected the leisure time area, however, suggests that this also is an area to be given careful consideration. Another question on the UMA market survey asked: "If you were to participate in a college level educational activity, which of the following would be of most interest to you? (check one of each pair)." Tables 19 and 20 show the responses to each of the pairs of alternatives.

Table 19

Interest in Practical or Theoretical Courses.*

Course Types	Percent of Responding Sample (N=48)
Practical or Applied Courses	85%
Theoretical Courses	<u>15%</u>
Total	100%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

Table 20

Interest in Skill Development Emphasis or Knowledge Emphasis.*

Emphasis	Percent of Responding Sample (N=48)
Skill development emphasis	52%
Knowledge emphasis	<u>48%</u>
Total	100%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

Table 19 shows that among these 48 persons, 85% favored practical or applied courses over theoretical. Table 20 shows about an equal number of respondents preferred courses that emphasized skills rather than emphasized knowledge. Another question on the UMA market survey asked: "If a postsecondary education opportunity were available to you, which of the following academic areas would be most appealing to you? (check all that apply)." The traditional academic alternatives are presented in Table 21, in the order of their frequency of selection.

Table 21

Relative Appeal of Various Academic Areas.*

Academic Area	Percent of Responding Sample (N=56)
Business and Administration (Accounting, Sales, Management, etc.)	38%
Psychology (Clinical, Social, Industrial)	23%
Humanities (Fine arts, Language, Philosophy)	23%
Social Sciences (Economics, Political, Sociology)	19%
Agriculture and Related Fields (Soils, Forestry & Farming)	19%
Other Professional Fields (Architecture, Law, Theology)	13%
Physical Science (Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry)	9%
Education (Elementary, Secondary, Adult)	7%
Health Professions (Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy)	7%
Biological Sciences (Botany, Ecology, Zoology)	5%
Engineering (Electrical, Civil, Mechanical)	5%
Mathematics	5%
Total	173%**

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**Total is over 100% because a number of respondents selected more than one area.

And, finally, respondents in the UMA market survey were asked to indicate with a checkmark which of the practical topics listed in Table 22 were important to them. The topics are listed in the order of frequency of selection, and the percentages refer to the proportion of the 50 respondents that selected each item.

Table 22

Relative Importance of Various Practical Topics.*

Topic	Percent of Responding Sample (N=50)
Income Tax/Personal Finances	44%
Investing	42%
Human Relations	34%
Consumerism	26%
Home Repair	26%
Gardening	20%
Real Estate	18%
Child Rearing	16%
Metrics	16%
Personal Health	16%
Photography	14%
Ecology	12%
Nutrition	10%
Interior Design	8%
Aging	8%
Drug Education	6%
Total	316%**

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**The total is over 100% because respondents chose an average of 3 topics each.

The most often selected practical topics of importance to this sample of 50 respondents were Income Tax/Personal Finance, and Investing, with 44% and 42% of the sample indicating these areas as being important to them. Human Relations comes in a close third, being chosen by about one-third of the sample. The remaining topics were selected by from 6% to 26% of the sample.

During 1961-62, Johnstone and Rivera (1965, pp. 2-3) found that, of the learning activities reported by adults in their sample, 33% were vocational, 20% were recreational, and 12% were in academic subjects. As few as 3% of the total studies were in public affairs or current events. The findings of the 1974 UMA market survey are mostly in agreement with the conclusions reached by Johnstone and Rivera (p. 3):

It is quite clear from the results of our study that the major emphasis in adult learning is on the practical rather than the academic; on the applied rather than the theoretical; and on skills rather than on knowledge or information. Subject matter directly useful in the performance of everyday tasks and obligations accounted for the most significant block of the total activities recorded. Together, the vocational and home and family life categories alone represented 44 percent of all formal courses studies and 47 percent of the subjects people had studied on their own. By comparison, the academic, religious, and public affairs categories--areas one might consider more concerned with ideas and values--made up just 30 percent of the courses and 22 percent of the independent studies. These figures illustrate the predominantly pragmatic quality of adult learning.

3. Do adults want/take courses for credit or non-credit? As already reported, Flinn (1974) found that about half of those who expressed an interest in a SUN-type program wanted to participate for credit. In the 1974 UMA survey a similar question was asked to two samples. One sample was asked the question: "In which of the following ways would you be most likely to continue your education?" Table 23 lists the three alternatives, and the percentage of responses to each alternative.

Table 23

Preference for College and/or Credit Courses.*

Method	Percent of Responding Sample (N=47)
Taking college courses for credit toward a degree	40%
Taking college courses, but not for credit toward a degree	21%
Taking non-credit courses not generally found in a college curriculum	<u>38%</u>
Total	99%**

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**Total less than 100% due to rounding error.

The distribution of responses in Table 23 shows that the college course for credit option and the non-college course for no credit option were each chosen by an equal proportion of the sample--about 40%. Only 20% of the sample felt that they would be likely to continue their education with a college course for no credit toward a degree. A second sample in the UMA market survey was asked the question: "If you were to participate in a college level educational activity, which of the following would be of most interest to you?" The responses to the credit/no-credit option are listed in Table 24. Note that the relative emphasis is similar to that indicated in Table 23, with over twice as ~~many~~ respondents indicating that if they would take a college course, they would want to take it for credit.

Table 24

Preference for Credit or Non-credit College Level Courses.*

	Percent of Responding Sample (N=53)
Credit	72%
Non-credit	28%
Total	100%

* Adapted from Eggert (1975).

Table 25 breaks down the credit/no-credit preference in terms of three age ranges. A clearly statistically significant relationship between age and credit option exists, with the younger persons preferring the credit option much more strongly than the older persons. There are a number of possible reasons for this relationship. One might be the fact that younger people are more educated in general, and feel more prepared to take a course for college credit. Another is that younger people may see an eventual degree toward which the credit could be applied as a greater possibility.

Table 25

Preference for Credit or Non-credit College Level Courses, by Age Group.*

Age Group	Credit	Non-Credit	Total
20 - 34 (N=15)	100%	--	100%
35 - 49 (N=27)	65%	35%	100%
50 - 64 (N=11)	25%	75%	100%

$\chi^2 = 13.78$ ($p < .01$)

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

Of the learners who enrolled in SUN's first two course offerings, 76% are taking the courses for credit. This figure is very close to the results obtained from the 1974 UMA market survey when 72% of the respondents reported that, if they were to engage in a college level educational activity, they would take it for credit.

4. At what locations would/do adults prefer to participate in an educational activity? The 1974 UMA market survey asked respondents to rate each of a number of locations in terms of being satisfactory for participation in an educational activity. The locations are listed in Table 26, in the order of percentage of times each was chosen as satisfactory. For the most part, the locations seem to be ordered according to a common sense notion of where higher level educational activities usually take place, with educational institutions high on the list, and churches and shopping centers at the bottom. The very notable exceptions to this rule are the learning center (if it existed near home) and the home itself. It is also important, however, to note the minority responses. Most of the locations were considered "satisfactory" by a large portion of the sample. Particularly worthy of note is that 35% of the respondents indicated that their place of work was a satisfactory location for an educational experience.

Although a parallel question to that on the UMA market survey was not given to SUN learners, one item on the Student Information Questionnaire asked a related question: "Do you have space available at home where you can study quietly if you wish? (check one)." Table 27 presents the results from that item as completed by SUN learners.

Table 26

Ratings of Various Locations for Educational Experiences.*

Location	Satisfactory	Ratings** (N=40)	
		No Preference	Not Satisfactory
Learning Center, if it existed near my home	82%	15%	2%
Local College	71%	12%	15%
In My Home	65%	9%	25%
University	64%	18%	18%
Library	53%	34%	12%
High School	47%	36%	17%
Civic Center	41%	32%	27%
Elementary School	40%	32%	27%
Museum, Art Gallery	35%	36%	28%
At My Place of Work	35%	19%	45%
YMCA	27%	40%	32%
Shopping Center	25%	33%	41%
A Church	12%	43%	45%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**Note that each row indicates the percentage of selections of each rating category. Thus, each row totals to 100%, with rounding error. For example, 82% of respondents indicated a learning center was a satisfactory location, 15% had no preference, and 2% regarded it as not satisfactory.

Table 27

Availability of Space at Home for SUN Learners to Study

Response	Percent*
Yes, at all times	66%
Yes, in daytime only	16%
Yes, but only after children have gone to bed	14%
No, plan to study at public library	--
No, plan to study at work	1%
No, plan to study at learning center	--
No, don't know yet where I will study	1%
Other plans	2%

*N=367, or 60% of learners enrolled in first two SUN courses.

It appears that most SUN learners do have space available at home to study, with 66% reporting "at all times" and 30% reporting at some time during a 24-hour period.

Johnstone and Rivera found that (pp. 4-5):

On the whole, adults do seem to prefer formal methods of study over informal ones, although quite striking differences were noted among different sectors of the population. When given a choice, older adults were much less likely to select formal classroom settings for their instruction and showed a relatively greater tendency to choose both private instruction and home study methods... Interestingly, no consistent differences were found in the methods of study preferred by men and women... Although high schools, colleges, and universities are highly influential in adult instruction, our inventory of learning activities revealed that more adults study outside the regular school system than within it--by a ratio of about two to one. Moreover, we estimated that 56% of all studies involving attendance at classes, lectures, or group discussions took place in institutions whose primary functions were not educational, such as churches and synagogues, private businesses, YMCA's, government agencies, the armed forces, and community institutions other than schools or adult education centers.

With reference to the Johnstone and Rivera (1965) findings and the results from the UMA/SUN questionnaires, it appears that those who might participate in the SUN program would find the learning center and home (non-traditional settings) satisfactory for educational experiences. Analyses were not accomplished to determine the relationship of age and sex to preferences of location for an educational activity.

5. What degree of direction would/do adult learners desire in their study?

An indication of the degree of independence desired by UMA/SUN's potential learners is the response to the question: "How do you feel you learn best?" The three alternatives are listed in Table 28, in the order in which they were presented.

Table 28

Responses to the Question "How Do You Feel You Learn Best?"

Amount of Direction	Percentage of Responding Sample (N=50)
I need others to direct me	8%
I can teach myself through independent study	16%
I learn best through a combination of independent and directed study	<u>76%</u>
Total	100%

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

The data in this table seem to indicate that the idea of directed independent study is an important one, and that relatively few people in this sample felt they could learn best by teaching themselves through independent study. It should be noted, however, that these four choices may be given quite different interpretations by different persons. "Teaching myself through independent study" could mean obtaining books and materials and receiving no additional help, or it could mean following a rigidly specified schedule at home. The same question was address in the UMA market survey from a somewhat different point of view. Table 29 lists the distribution of responses to the question: "If you were to engage in an educational activity, which one of the following educational means would best suit your needs?"

Table 29

Relative Suitability of Various Educational Means.*

Activity	Percent of Responding Sample (N=50)
Evening Class	52%
Educational TV (ETV)	22%
Regular Classes at College or University	22%
Correspondence Study	20%
Conference or Workshop	16%
Local Discussion Group	12%
Study on My Own	12%
Total	156%**

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**The total is over 100% because some persons selected more than one activity.

According to these data, the most suitable educational means for this sample was the evening class, selected by about half of the respondents. Only 12% of the 50 said that studying on their own or with a local discussion group would be best suited to their needs. The remaining alternatives were each selected by about 20% of the sample.

6. What form of mediated presentation would adult learners prefer? In an effort to assess the media preferences of SUN's potential learners, respondents in the UMA market survey were asked to rank each of six listed media according to their preference for use in learning. Respondents were asked to mark "1" after the most preferred media, "2" after the second most preferred, and so forth. Table 30 presents the six media, in the order of their average ranking.

Table 30

Average Rankings of Various Learning Sources (N=37).*

Rank	Learning Source	Average Ranking
1	A Personal Presentation or Group Discussion	1.68
2	A Book	2.56
3	Educational TV	2.69
4	A Booklet, Article, or Pamphlet	3.61
5	Tape Recording or Record	3.97
6	Radio	5.02

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

It appears that the choices were made primarily on the basis of knowledge of what has been available in the past. The personal presentation or group discussion approach was most preferred by the sample, while a book and educational TV were the next most highly preferred. Radio was the least preferable media for learning of the six presented.

7. What obstacles prevent adults from taking courses? The UMA market survey asked respondents to indicate which two or three of the factors listed in Table 31 might prevent them from participating in additional educational experiences. The factors are listed in the order of their frequency of selection.

Table 31

Factors Preventing Participation in Additional Educational Experiences.*

Deterrent Factor	Percent of Responding Sample (N=50) Selecting Factor
Not Enough Time	56%
Family/Job Responsibilities	48%
Inadequate Personal Finances	32%
Lack of Practical Courses Available	32%
Lack of Motivation	22%
Lack of Educational Opportunities	10%
Doubts about Ability to do the Work	8%
Other	6%
Total	215%**

*Adapted from Eggert (1975).

**The total is more than 100% since most persons chose more than one item.

"Not Enough Time" and "Family/Job Responsibilities" was each selected by about half of the respondents as factors preventing their participation in additional educational experiences. "Lack of Educational Opportunities" and "Doubts About Ability to do the Work" were not reported as significant deterrents to additional participation.

Johnstone and Rivera (1965, p. 17) found that:

The barriers to participation most frequently cited by persons classified as members of the "potential audience" were financial (43%), busy schedules (39%), and a lack of sufficient physical energy at the end of the day (37%)...it was significant that large majorities of potential participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds said lack of money prevented their enrollment in courses.

Learners who actually enrolled in the first two SUN courses were asked to complete the following item: "In studying with SUN, which of the following are major concerns for you?" Learner responses to this item are presented in Table 32. The single most frequently stated concern of SUN learners was "Academic and learning problems; starting to study again, new methods, concentration, memory, etc." However, "Program pace, keeping up with the SUN schedule," "Lack of time and energy," and "Self-discipline; getting down to regular work" were also noted by SUN learners as of great concern.

Table 32

Major Concerns for Learners Studying with SUN

Percent Choosing Item as Greatest Concern	Item	Percent Selecting Extent of Concern		Total*
		Major	Minor or None	
5%	Work pressures and responsibilities	46%	54%	100%
2%	Domestic interruptions and demands	52%	48%	100%
4%	Lack of personal contact with teachers	32%	68%	100%
1%	Lack of personal contact with other students	17%	83%	100%
8%	Self-discipline; getting down to regular work	60%	40%	100%
20%	Academic and learning problem; starting to study again, new methods, concentration, memory, etc.	65%	35%	100%
14%	Program pace, keeping up with the SUN schedule	50%	50%	100%
12%	Lack of time and energy	38%	62%	100%
1%	Personal disability	4%	96%	100%
1%	Obtaining books and materials	7%	93%	100%
33%	Other	26%	74%	100%

*N=367, or 60% of learners enrolled in first two SUN courses.

How Is Information About the Needs of the Market Used?

The results of market surveys described in this paper could serve three kinds of purposes: informing those audiences who make deliberations and decisions about the UMA/SUN program; drawing tentative conclusions about the potential and actual learners who enroll in an open learning program; and, targeting areas for further inquiry.

The potential users of market survey information about the present and future clients for open learning represent a pluralistic audience. Some of the users are located external to the organization, some are located within the organization. Figure 1 attempts to portray the kinds of broad program questions which various UMA/SUN audiences might raise. Note that, for illustrative purposes, an "X" appears in those rows and columns where market survey information is viewed by the Office of Research and Evaluation as critical input for deliberations/decisions by a given audience. For each program question raised, market survey information has been identified in Figure 1 as critical input for decisions/deliberations by one internal audience and one external audience. For each UMA/SUN audience, market survey information has been identified as critical input for two program questions. Again, these judgments reflect potential and not actual use of market survey information by various UMA/SUN audiences. Furthermore, not all of the questions raised in Figure 1 have been addressed through market surveys; those questions which have been addressed through market surveys are not completely or unambiguously responded to. Of the information generated through UMA/SUN surveys, it is important to inquire as to what uses the information has been put.

UMA/SUN AUDIENCES

X= information viewed as critical
input for deliberations/decisions

BROAD PROGRAM QUESTIONS WHICH
MARKET SURVEYS COULD ADDRESS

	Internal										External									
	R & E Staff	Advisory Councils	Course Develop. Teams	Delivery System Coord.	UMA/SUN Administration	Learning Center Staff	Course Faculty	Enrolled learners	Potential learners	Other Innovative Prog.	Institutional Execs	Potential UMA Members	Academicians	Ed Res/Evaluators	Government Officials	Funding Organizations				
• Who are the potential learners of UMA/SUN?			X								X									
• Who actually enrolls in UMA/SUN courses?	X														X					
• What segment of the potential learner populations is not being reached by UMA/SUN?				X												X				
• For what reasons would/do learners enroll with UMA/SUN or use UMA/SUN services?					X			X												
Do enrolled learners complete UMA/SUN courses, and with what success?	X													X						
• Do UMA/SUN learners enroll in a subsequent course, and if so where?		X													X					
• What courses would/do learners prefer to have offered by UMA/SUN?		X											X							
• How large is the potential enrollment for a given UMA/SUN course?				X								X								
• Do learners want courses for credit or non-credit?			X										X							
• At what locations would/do UMA/SUN learners prefer to take courses?				X								X								
• What media would/do learners enrolled with UMA/SUN prefer to use?		X												X						
• What degree of structure would/do learners enrolled with UMA/SUN want?							X			X										
• What obstacles would/do prevent UMA/SUN learners from coursework?								X											X	
• What counseling services would/do UMA/SUN learners desire?						X				X										
• What existing programs are competing for the potential learners of UMA/SUN?							X					X								
• What is the UMA/SUN program offering that existing programs are not?								X	X											

Figure 1. Types of Broad Program Questions and Audiences Which Market Survey Information Could Address.

Information from market surveys has been instrumental in at least two specific UMA/SUN decisions to date. The results of market surveys conducted by Ross, Brown, and Hassel (1972) and Central Surveys, Inc. (1973) indicated that the audience likely to enroll in a SUN-type program would desire courses in Accounting and Psychology. Although it cannot be presumed that this market information by itself determined the decision, Accounting I and Introductory Psychology indeed were the first two courses selected by UMA/SUN planners for development and/or acquisition. A second kind of decision also was affected by market survey information. Given the input about the size of the potential learner market from the market surveys conducted by Ross, Brown, and Hassel (1972), Central Surveys, Inc. (1973), and Flinn (1973), an estimated 2% of the adult population of Nebraska was selected as the basis for projecting enrollments in the SUN program. The projected enrollments were used in the design of an "economic model" and a "cash flow model" for the purpose of estimating the ability of the open learning program to sustain itself. Given the projected enrollments in the SUN program, as well as a set of working assumptions about the costs of the program, it was concluded by a team of economic analysts that UMA/SUN would be an economically viable enterprise and would be competitive with even the least costly segments of American postsecondary education (Lumsden and Attiyeh, 1974).

Other broad curriculum or content decisions may have been affected by market survey information. In the case of the 1974 UMA market survey, the information has only recently been made available, and it is too early to indicate the impact of that information on decision making. However, it appears that from the available information about potential and actual learners of UMA/SUN several tentative conclusions can be drawn, which may affect decisions about the UMA/SUN program.

First, several national commissions--Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1971), Newman Task Force (1971), and Commission on Non-Traditional Study (1973)--have argued that several segments of the adult population would be interested in non-traditional study programs and open learning. The market survey information available through UMA/SUN indicates that there is an interest among the adult population of the UMA region for an open learning program; however, caution should be exercised in concluding what the actual size of the market is. A conservative estimate of 2% of the adult population of the region would seem justified. The number of courses an individual adult would take, or under what conditions, has not been determined. Furthermore, it is not known to what extent the potential clientele of UMA/SUN are also the potential clientele of other programs in the UMA region.

Second, it becomes apparent through reviewing UMA/SUN market survey information that the lack of access to current higher education programs is a major concern of those who would enroll in an open learning program. Time, financial and family/job factors have been identified as major deterrents for adult involvement in postsecondary education opportunities, including those offered through SUN.

Third, the reasons for involvement in an open learning program are diverse. Some adults would emphasize career improvement, others would emphasize self-improvement, while still others would emphasize cultural growth and development. It appears from the information available that the UMA curriculum philosophy of providing courses which meet each of these three kinds of reasons for involvement in open learning can be supported. "Simply, to learn" is the singular most important goal which SUN learners have identified for themselves. Almost any course could be rationalized on the basis of a general adult interest to learn.

The market surveys conducted thus far are suggestive of further inquiry which could lead to conclusions about the UMA/SUN learner audience. For example,

the home environment and learning centers near the home were among the most preferable locations for study which adults selected in the 1974 UMA market survey. However, the lack of personal contact with teachers and other learners appears to be a concern of some potential clients, along with doubts about academic and study skills. How can this problem be handled, and for what kinds of learners? Should UMA/SUN develop a study skills "module" for use in all courses? Also, a large percentage of those taking the first two SUN courses are doing so for credit. Is it that these learners desire a college degree eventually, or that they have the notion that college courses should be taken for credit? Does UMA/SUN need an additional module of instruction which prepares learners for the UMA/SUN program? Continued studies which investigate, for example, the relationship between age and credit may lead to some conclusions about the reasons for participation in the UMA/SUN program. Finally, further inquiry is needed to help clarify the expectations of open learners for "independent study" and "guidance." The market survey information to date indicates that both potential and actual learners want the independence allowed by studying through SUN, yet they also want the help and guidance of a teacher. Are these mutually exclusive wants, and can they be met for the same learner?

Improvements Needed in Market Surveys and Their Use

Based on the experience of UMA/SUN market surveys conducted thus far, several improvements are necessary for this type of needs assessment data to be productively used in broad curriculum decisions.

First, the various dimensions of the educational need concept must be investigated more closely. Bradshaw's (1972) four types of educational need (normative, felt, expressed, and comparative) could serve as a basis for investigations into the concept of educational need. The four market surveys reported in this paper dealt almost exclusively with "felt" needs, i.e., the wants, desires, and goals of potential learners. Yet, the payoff in terms of learner enrollments appears to be in assessing "expressed" needs. For example, do people who indicate a felt educational need actually enroll (expressed need) in a course offered through SUN? Or, if a learner enrolls (expressed need) in one SUN course, is the learner likely to enroll in another SUN course? Under what conditions do felt needs become expressed needs? At the present time, SUN has a clientele with expressed needs, i.e., they have enrolled in one or more SUN courses. Furthermore, the Student Information Questionnaire gets at some of the questions about the relationship between felt and expressed needs, for example, reasons for choosing to study with SUN, learner goals, and learner concerns. These items should be carefully investigated with respect to learners who continue to enroll with SUN and learners who "drop out" of courses or the program. Furthermore, these items could be used in future regional surveys conducted by UMA to ascertain what segment of the potential learner audience is currently enrolled with SUN.

It also would be profitable for UMA/SUN to investigate "comparative" needs, that is, discrepancies among adult learner populations in terms of present and ideal conditions. For example, what are the characteristics of the adult learner

populations who are excluded from particular educational opportunities or who are unable to participate given personal constraints? Where are these potential learners located and what kinds of educational services do they want? Are educational services presently available to meet these wants, or are new educational services required?

UMA/SUN could also document the "normative" needs of various segments of the adult population in the region. The norms, or standards, for educational experiences could be one basis for deciding what courses to develop and/or acquire. For example, federal and state laws may require the certification of particular personnel heretofore not certified. One recent example pertains to the training and certification of pesticide applicators in the Midwest. Another example relates to the continuing education requirements for registered nurses. If target populations such as these exist, and if standards or training needs are not being met through existing programs, course selection could be made consistent with the normative needs of specific target groups.

A second improvement relevant to the market surveys conducted by and for SUN relates to the method of data collection. Although personal interviews and personal questionnaires were used in the four market surveys reported in this paper, mail questionnaires were the predominant instrument used. The vagaries of mail questionnaires, e.g., rate of return, construct validity, and item reliability, strongly suggest the use of additional instruments and techniques for the collection of market survey data. Although other methods may have some of the same faults as mail questionnaires, they do offer some unique opportunities to get at data difficult to collect through mail questionnaires. For example, the community study approach described by McMahon (1970, pp. 15-22) is an attractive possibility in market surveys for SUN. SUN learning centers and their staff are currently located in four different geographical locations in the state,

two being in metropolitan-type areas and two being in outstate, more rural areas. As a part of their work, SUN learning center staff could conduct a continuing market survey of their area, looking at the broad as well as the specific needs of their surrounding communities (Sell, 1974a). Furthermore, learning center staff are in a unique position to assess what educational experiences and services are not currently available in their communities, how to help coordinate these educational experiences and services that are available, and where SUN is likely to make a unique contribution. The anthropological field methods described by Lutz and Ramsey (1974) would be appropriate for the kinds of community surveys SUN learning center staff might undertake.

Although it may be costly to gather market survey data through personal interviews, this method of data collection should be scrutinized closely as a complementary approach to mail questionnaires. For example, if a respondent to a mail questionnaire marks an interest in taking an Accounting or Psychology course, how does the course selector or instructional developer know what the respondent meant? What Accounting or Psychology as a content area mean to the content expert may be quite different from the meaning attached by the respondent. Personal interviews could help to clarify the preference(s) of the respondent, as well as the conditions under which potential learners would enroll in the SUN program. Interviews also may be beneficial from the public relations aspect of marketing. Questions which a potential learner has about the SUN program may not be answered clearly in the literature mailed to the respondent, whereas an interviewer could address those questions or follow up the interview with the answers.

A third improvement for the use of market surveys and their information pertains to the curriculum decision making process. Markets other than potential and actual learners are important to curriculum planners and course developers,

especially when courses are offered for credit. In a complex organization such as UMA/SUN, multiple parties influence the nature of the curriculum and specific course offerings. For example, in the case of UMA the following groups may impact on curriculum decisions: national commissions on non-traditional study, the National Institute of Education, the Academic Council, the Board of Directors, advisory panels, content consultants, and private foundations. In the case of SUN, the following groups may influence policy decisions about course delivery: the University of Nebraska, state and community colleges, employers, advisory panels, and foundations. Given the multiple audiences of UMA/SUN, market surveys could be directed at the range of individuals and groups whose judgment is important to UMA/SUN. To the extent where possible, parallel inquiries into educational needs and priorities could be undertaken with all influential parties. This conception of the "market" which UMA/SUN serves does not help to decide how the judgments of multiple audiences can be collected and used in curriculum decisions and the delivery of courses. The organization must develop a sense of what information it can use and when, to better improve the decision making process. Stake and Gooler (1971) have discussed the problem of identifying and measuring priorities which various audiences may hold for an educational program.

Fourth, needs assessment undertaken through market surveys faces severe constraints in the use of the results for decision making. Some of the decisions are of such a nature that "facts" of any kind may be ineffectual, e.g., in modifying the broad open learning goals of the UMA/SUN program. Glasman and Sell (1972) have discussed this problem as it bears upon administrative decisions. They argue that it would be most effective to challenge philosophical positions, not with "facts," but with the possible inconsistencies of the philosophical positions held. Other kinds of decisions, like courses to be selected or developed, may depend upon the philosophical underpinnings of the UMA/SUN

curriculum, and not upon the results of a market survey. The decision to select a particular course may also be affected by what the marketplace has to offer, that is, what courses are available for acquisition. UMA, by itself, cannot expect to develop all of the tentative list of 55 courses on its curriculum. Most of these courses will have to be acquired as is, or modified from acquired materials. However, within the decision to acquire a given course, market survey data could be influential in looking at specifics of the course and the results of previous use of the course. Also, given the appropriate lead time, it be possible to help verify the demand for the remaining courses to be developed as part of the UMA curriculum offerings. Such verification could aim at the potential audience interested in each type of course. At the present time, however, the next set of courses have already moved to the development stage. For these courses, a market survey would be counterproductive, in that the decision has already been made to offer the course. However, previous market survey information may help the course developers get a better feel for the potential audience of the course, and thereby increase their awareness of the potential learners. It is recommended that, from the decision making perspective of market survey information, those market surveys be undertaken which have the highest probability to be considered as a legitimate input in the decision making process.

Finally, the utility of information from market surveys is probably greatest when viewed within a more total marketing package than "one shot" attempts to describe a particular segment of the market. The market model described in the second section of this paper points to two important aspects of program development which UMA/SUN has not taken full advantage of. One aspect is informing people of the availability of the program. Unless people are aware of the existence of a program and what it has to offer, it is not an educational opportunity to them. Some experimentation with market surveys would be appropriate.

For example, following a personal interview or mail questionnaire, the respondent could be contacted regarding his/her impressions of the program, what it has to offer and why or why not that meets his/her interests, and other people who have been communicated with about the program. In this sense, the administration of the market survey would be viewed as a "treatment," with effects which could be documented and studied more closely. Another aspect of program development which market surveys could help serve is in identifying the services which people would find desirable and services which they would use if available. This question relates to the clearinghouse and referral function of learning centers, and might help learning center staff and the SUN administration get a better handle on who clients might be for this kind of service. Therefore, a more complete marketing approach to the development of the UMA/SUN program would involve inquiries not only about courses and course preferences, but also about services and the kinds of services which adults would use. If the research findings by Tough (1971) and others is correct, a large number of learning opportunities are already available in most communities in the region, and the important contribution which can be made is, not to create more opportunities, but to get people in touch with what already exists and find ways to help people assess their own satisfaction with those learning experiences.

Footnotes

1. The UMA Proposal to the National Institute of Education (NIE) for funding during 1975 and beyond states a rationale for open learning (UMA, 1974, pp. 12-13):

Education generally has been viewed in this country as a social good deserving support from public funds. The benefits derived from education, especially postsecondary education, clearly include: (1) Self-development of individuals, so that they can lead fuller and richer lives and are able to grow emotionally and intellectually through understanding themselves and their worlds better; (2) provision of skills which will enable persons to be employed at occupations requiring those skills, and thus contribute to their economic well-being as well as to that of society as a whole; (3) Expansion of the orderly processes of citizen participation in democratic government by insuring that the largest possible number of citizens have sufficient educational background to understand the processes of government, to be able to discuss intelligently matters of public policy, and to have the analytic and critical abilities to make informed judgments on public issues.

The purpose of a postsecondary open learning system is to extend opportunity for these benefits to a wider group of people, including those for whom the rigidities of time, space, and curricular and course requirements in traditional institutions make learning infeasible or difficult, and those who are reluctant to enter the present system because of their age, education, cultural, or socio-economic background; to provide these benefits through educational opportunities that present institutions and agencies do not provide; and to extend those benefits in new ways that may be more effective in terms of increasing the amount and quality of learning and the learner's sense of control over his learning, and in terms of individual and social cost.

2. The UMA Proposal to NIE (1974, Appendix B) elaborates the open learning goals for UMA.
3. See the UMA Proposal to NIE (1974, pp. 46-47) for a statement of UMA Curriculum plans, and a list of the courses under consideration for acquisition/development.
4. Gideonse notes that he is not referring to any notion of "free market economies," wherein that which sells best is "best," or somehow foreordained, or good. He argues that sales are not the criteria which determine success, but that the criterion which is most important, ultimately, is client satisfaction, i.e., are individuals and the society receiving from education what they desire?

5. Further details of this account can be secured from the UMA Office of Research and Evaluation, Working Paper No. 1, An Examination of Goals to Potential and Actual Learners: University of Mid-America/State University of Nebraska, 1975.
6. Adults are defined by Johnstone and Rivera (1965, p. 2) as "persons either twenty-one or over, married, or the head of a household." An educational activity refers to an event "consciously and systematically organized for purposes of acquiring new knowledge, information, or skills." (p. 1)
7. Potential participant is defined as "someone manifesting two fundamental dispositions: an interest in knowing more about something and a readiness to engage in systematic study to satisfy his interest" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965, p. 14).
8. If one accepts the conservative estimate of 2% of the adult population as potential participants in SUN, the size of the market for Nebraska would be about 18,000. (Figure based on state population of 1,500,000 with 60% classified as adults.)
9. An educational need, according to Knowles (1970), is "something a person ought to learn for his own good, for the good of an organization, or for the good of society." When Knowles speaks of an educational need, he means a gap between an individual's present level of capability and a higher level of capability required for effective performance. Effective performance may be defined by the individual, the organization, or the society.

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APPENDIX A

1974 Market Survey Forms 1, 2, and 3

FIRST CLASS PERMIT
NO. 577
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

NO POSTAGE STAMP NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY:

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
P. O. BOX 82446
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68501

Dear Fellow Citizen:

Many adults want to continue their education in some form throughout their life. There are many reasons for doing so. And there are also a number of different ways in which you might continue your education.

We at the State University of Nebraska (SUN) want to provide more opportunities for you to learn and grow in a way most convenient for you. To accomplish this, we need to know more about what educational needs, interests, and opportunities exist among the people of Nebraska.

If you would take just a few moments to respond to the questions in this little brochure, you will be helping us plan our SUN educational program to best meet your needs. When you've completed the questions, please tape or staple the brochure so the return address is showing. No postage is necessary.

Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Dennis D. Gooler

Dennis D. Gooler
Director

College Home
College Home
College Home
SUN

Your age?

Under 20 . . . () 35-49 . . . ()
20 - 34 . . . () 50-64 . . . ()
65 or over. ()

Your sex?

Male () Female ()

Highest level education completed?

11th grade or less ()
High school graduate ()
Trade, business or technical
school diploma. ()
1 - 3 yrs. college. ()
College graduate (4 yrs.) . . . ()
Graduate degree ()

Marital and family status?

Single ()
Married, no children ()
Married, with mostly
young children ()
Married with mostly
grown children ()
Widowed, divorced or
separated ()

How many years has it been since
you last participated in a college-
level education experience?

Have not participated ()
Within last year. ()
1 - 2 yrs ()
3 - 5 yrs ()
More than 5 yrs ()

Please indicate your main area of
work by listing job title or duties.

Which best describes where you live?

Rural/farm ()
Small town (2000 or less) . . . ()
Medium town (10,000 or so). . . ()
Larger town (20,000 or so). . . ()
City (more than 20,000) ()

If you were to participate in an educa-
tional activity, what major reasons would
there be for you to do so? (Check (✓)
all that apply.)

☐ To increase my current level of
schooling
☐ To get to know other adults
☐ To become a better friend, spouse,
or parent
☐ To prepare for a job or career
improvement
☐ To increase my general knowledge
☐ To help me get more out of a hobby
or interest
☐ To spend my leisure time in a
worthwhile way
☐ To become a better person or
citizen
☐ To satisfy my curiosity about a
particular topic.

From what source(s) would you most likely
obtain information about educational
opportunities for yourself?

A friend, relative or neighbor . . . ()
Clergy ()
Teacher/educator ()
Employer ()
Newspaper/Magazine ()
Radio/TV ()
Brochure, flier, or
announcement ()
Extension Service ()
Other _____ ()

If you were to engage in an educational
activity which one of the following
educational means would best suit your
needs?

Local discussion group ()
Evening Class. ()
Correspondence study ()
Conference or workshop ()
Educational TV (ETV) ()
Regular classes at a college
or university ()
Study on my own ()
Other _____ ()
(specify)

Where would you like to participate in an
education experience? Rate each location.

Location	Satis- factory	No preference	Not satis- factory
In my home. ()	()	()	()
At place of work. ()	()	()	()
A church ()	()	()	()
Civic center. ()	()	()	()
YMCA ()	()	()	()
Library ()	()	()	()
Elementary school. ()	()	()	()
High School. ()	()	()	()
Local College. ()	()	()	()
University ()	()	()	()
Learning center, if it existed near my home ()	()	()	()
Museum, art gallery()	()	()	()

ur age?

Under 20 . . . () 35-49 . . . ()
20 - 34 . . . () 50-64 . . . ()
65 or over. ()

ur sex?

Male () Female ()

ighest level education completed?

11th grade or less ()
High school graduate ()
Trade, business or technical
school diploma. ()
1 - 3 yrs. college. ()
College graduate (4 yrs.) . . . ()
Graduate degree ()

rital and family status?

Single ()
Married, no children ()
Married, with mostly
young children ()
Married with mostly
grown children ()
Widowed, divorced or
separated ()

w many years has it been since
u last participated in a college-
vel education experience?

Have not participated ()
Within last year. ()
1 - 2 yrs ()
3 - 5 yrs ()
More than 5 yrs ()

ease indicate your main area of
rk by listing job title or duties.

ich best describes where you live?

Rural/farm ()
Small town (2000 or less) . . . ()
Medium town (10,000 or so). . . ()
Larger town (20,000 or so). . . ()
City (more than 20,000) ()

most important to you if you were to
take part in an educational activity
(that is, lecture, course, educational
television)?

___ Regular school subjects
___ Trade, business, or vocational
subjects
___ Public affairs and citizenship
___ Home improvement and family
living
___ Hobbies, recreation, and
leisure
___ Community development
___ Youth leadership work
___ Agricultural subjects

Following are listed some practical topics
that adults frequently are interested in
studying about. Check those that are
important to you. Feel free to suggest
other topics.

___ Child rearing ___ Gardening
___ Real estate ___ Consumerism
___ Photography ___ Income tax/
Personal finances
___ Interior design ___ Home repair
___ Metrics ___ Nutrition
___ Aging ___ Investing
___ Ecology ___ Drug education
___ Human relations ___ Personal health

___ (specify) ___ (specify)

How do you feel you learn best? (check
one)

I need others to direct me. . . . ()

I can teach myself through
independent study. ()

I learn best through a combination
of independent and directed study()

sources according to which source you
prefer to use in learning. The most
preferred source should be given a
"1" in the appropriate bracket, the
second a "2", and so forth.

A book ()
Educational TV ()
A personal presentation
or group discussion ()
Tape recording or record. . . . ()
A booklet, article, or pamphlet ()
Radio ()

In your opinion which two or three
factors might prevent you from
participating in more educational
experiences?

___ Inadequate personal finances
___ Lack of motivation
___ Family/job responsibilities
___ Not enough time
___ Lack of educational opportunities
___ Inadequate previous educational
preparation
___ Lack of practical courses
available
___ Doubts about ability to do
the work
___ Other _____
(Specify)

In which of the following ways would
you be most likely to continue your
education?

___ Taking college courses for credit
toward a degree
___ Taking college courses, but not
for credit toward a degree
___ Taking non-credit courses not
generally found in a college
curriculum.

Your age?

Under 20 . . () 35-49 . . . ()
20 - 34 . . () 50-64 . . . ()
65 or over. ()

Your sex?

Male () Female ()

Highest level education completed?

11th grade or less ()
High school graduate ()
Trade, business or technical
school diploma. ()
1 - 3 yrs. college. ()
College graduate (4 yrs.) . . . ()
Graduate degree ()

Marital and family status?

Single ()
Married, no children ()
Married, with mostly
young children ()
Married with mostly
grown children ()
Widowed, divorced or
separated ()

How many years has it been since
you last participated in a college-
level education experience?

Have not participated ()
Within last year. ()
1 - 2 yrs ()
3 - 5 yrs ()
More than 5 yrs ()

Please indicate your main area of
work by listing job title or duties.

Which best describes where you live?

Rural/farm ()
Small town (2000 or less) . . . ()
Medium town (10,000 or so). . . ()
Larger town (20,000 or so). . . ()
City (more than 20,000) ()

If you were to participate in a college-
level educational activity, which of the
following would be of most interest to
you? (Check (✓) one for each pair.)

☐ Practical or applied courses
☐ Theoretical courses

☐ Skill development emphasis
☐ Knowledge emphasis

☐ Credit
☐ Non-credit

To what extent do you feel you are aware
of existing educational opportunities
that would meet your needs and/or
interests?

I am extremely well informed. ()

I am rather well informed ()

I am somewhat aware ()

I am rather uninformed ()

I am absolutely uninformed ()

If you were to engage in a new educational
activity, you would probably have to
sacrifice, reduce, or replace something
you now do. Which current activity would
you likely spend less time on? (Check all
that apply.)

Work () Religious ()

Hobbies. () Civic/political. ()

Social () Fraternal service ()

Recreational. . () Family or home . ()

Leisure. () Other. ()

If a postsecondary education opportunity
were available to you, which of the fol-
lowing academic areas would be most
appealing to you?
(Check all that apply.)

☐ Business and Administration
(accounting, sales, manage-
ment, etc.)

☐ Engineering (electrical, civil,
mechanical)

☐ Physical Science (physics,
astronomy, chemistry)

☐ Education (elementary,
secondary, adult)

☐ Health Professions (medicine,
dentistry, pharmacy)

☐ Biological sciences (botany,
ecology, zoology)

☐ Agriculture and Related Fields
(soils, forestry, farming)

☐ Psychology (clinical, social,
industrial)

☐ Social Sciences (economics,
political, sociology)

☐ Humanities (fine arts,
language, philosophy)

☐ Other Professional Fields
(architecture, law, theology)

☐ Mathematics

Do you think you will participate in
some type of academic course work in
the next five years?

☐ Yes, I'm quite sure.

☐ Yes, I probably will.

☐ I can't say one way or the other.

☐ No, I probably won't.

APPENDIX B

Student Information Questionnaire



STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PROJECT
P. O. BOX 82446 LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68501 PHONE (402) 472-3587

Dear SUN Student:

The State University of Nebraska (SUN) is a non-traditional program designed to provide learning experiences for people in their own homes. As our first students, you and your friends and neighbors will be participating in a unique educational situation. The students and the courses are not encompassed by the boundaries of a college campus. At the same time, you and other students will not have day-to-day personal contact with an instructor. These are advantages and limitations of SUN.

In order to provide you with an opportunity to tell us about your experience with SUN courses, we will be in touch with you several times throughout the course. This questionnaire is the first of our questions to you.

For the first experimental year of SUN we will be asking all students to complete the Student Information Questionnaire. We realize this is a long form and it may ask you a few personal questions. We request your cooperation in filling out and returning the questionnaire. If it is not possible for you to complete an item, please go on to the next item. ALL YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE. Under NO circumstances will individual responses be reported to anyone. This information will be used only by the Office of Research and Evaluation to make revisions in present SUN courses and to make decisions about future SUN policies.

Your responses will tell us a great deal about the SUN student body. We need this information in order to make SUN offerings more relevant and useful to its students. It will help our staff to more effectively reach its goal to serve the educational needs of the Nebraska Community.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call us or write your comments at the end of this form. We appreciate your help; thank you.

Cordially,

Dennis D. Gooler
Director of Research
and Evaluation

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name _____
Last First Middle
2. Social security number _____
3. Present address _____
4. Marital and family status:
Single ☐ No children ☐
Married ☐ Mostly young children ☐
Widowed, divorced, etc. ☐ Mostly grown children ☐
5. Have you ever served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces?
Yes, am serving now ☐ No ☐
Yes, but not serving now ☐

6. How many years in total have you resided in Nebraska? (Mark one)
Less than 1 year ☐ 6-10 years ☐
1-5 years ☐ 11 or more years ☐
7. How many years have you resided at your present address? (Mark one)
Less than 1 year ☐ 6-10 years ☐
1-5 years ☐ 11 or more years ☐
8. How many states have you resided in (include Nebraska)? _____
9. How many countries have you resided in (other than U.S.)? _____

10. Which best describes the community in which you presently live?

Farm or ranch	☐	Town (10,000-50,000)	☐
Town (under 2,000)	☐	City (50,000 or over)	☐
Town (2,000-10,000)	☐		

11. What is the highest level of education attained by your parents or guardians and spouse?

	Father	Mother	Spouse
11th grade or less	☐	☐	☐
High school graduate	☐	☐	☐
Trade, business or technical school diploma	☐	☐	☐
1-3 years of college	☐	☐	☐
College graduate	☐	☐	☐
Graduate study or professional degree	☐	☐	☐

12. What was your total income last year? Consider annual income from all sources before taxes. (Check one)

Less than \$1,000	☐	\$15,001-\$20,000	☐
\$1,001-\$4,000	☐	\$20,001-\$30,000	☐
\$4,001-\$7,000	☐	\$30,001-\$40,000	☐
\$7,001-\$10,000	☐	\$40,000 +	☐
\$10,001-\$15,000	☐		

II. EDUCATION

This section covers your previous education. It is important in planning for us to know what kind of educational background our students have.

13. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Check one)

11th grade or less	☐
High school graduate	☐
Trade, business or technical school diploma	☐
1-3 years college	☐
College graduate (4 years)	☐
Graduate study	☐

14. How many years has it been since you last participated in a formal educational experience?

Within past year	☐	Between 3-5 years ago	☐
Between 1-2 years ago	☐	5 years or more ago	☐

Please describe briefly the last formal educational experience you participated in.

III. WORK

This section covers your present job, if you are now working, and the demands it makes on your time. We need to know more about our students' careers since many SUN students are probably planning to use their courses for career advancement or career changes.

15. How many hours per week do you work? (Include a second job or regular overtime.)

Does not apply	☐	31 to 40 hours	☐
10 hours or less	☐	41 to 50 hours	☐
Between 11 and 20 hours	☐	Over 50 hours	☐
21-30 hours	☐		

16. How many years have you worked at your present job?

17. Please rank your satisfaction with your present job?

Very satisfied	☐	Somewhat dissatisfied	☐
Satisfied	☐	Very dissatisfied	☐
Neutral	☐		

IV. LEISURE TIME

18. What are your main leisure time activities and interests? Mark approximately how often you participated in these activities during the last year.

	Never	Rare	Occasionally	Frequently
Reading newspapers, magazines, journals	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading fiction and non-fiction books	☐	☐	☐	☐
Indoor activities: chess, poker, ping-pong	☐	☐	☐	☐
Outdoor activities: hiking, hunting, swimming, golf, camping	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attending movies, concerts, plays, sports events, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participating in plays, concerts, sports events.	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Never	Rare	Occasionally	Frequently
Arts and handicrafts, painting, woodworking, sewing, photography, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Traveling	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visiting with friends, relatives	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participating in church and community activities (other than sports)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking special interest classes (i.e., cooking, woodworking, tennis, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐

19. What types of newspapers and magazines do you read regularly? (Check all that apply)
- | | |
|--|-----|
| Daily newspapers | [] |
| Local weekly newspapers | [] |
| News and business magazines | [] |
| Career or professionally-oriented magazines and journals | [] |
| Special interest magazines (i.e., sports, fashions, gardening, etc.) | [] |
| Other _____ | [] |

(Please list)

20. Estimate the number of hours you watched television in the past week?
- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| None | [] | 12-15 hours | [] |
| 3 hours or less | [] | 16-19 hours | [] |
| 4-7 hours | [] | 20-23 hours | [] |
| 8-11 hours | [] | | |

21. What types of television programs do you prefer? (Check all that apply)
- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|---|-----|
| Sports programs | [] | Music and variety shows | [] |
| News reports | [] | Serious talks, discussions, interviews, including documentaries | [] |
| Drama/plays | [] | Adult education programs | [] |
| Detective, mystery and western series | [] | Quizzes and games | [] |
| Situation comedy, comedy series | [] | | |
| Religious programs | [] | | |

22. What is your favorite television program?
- _____

23. Please list all voluntary programs or civic organizations in which you have participated in the past few years. (e.g., fire department, church activity or auxiliary groups, school board, little league).

Program or Organization

If you held an office, please name it below.

V. RESOURCES

The following questions ask about the resources (time, money, space, etc.) you have. How do you think the resources or lack of them will affect your success with SUN courses? These questions are designed to provide information to help us in planning future SUN courses.

24. Finding the money to pay for tuition and materials for a SUN course is:
- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| A severe hardship | [] | Reasonably easy | [] |
| Quite difficult | [] | No problem | [] |

25. Apart from tuition do you think taking the course is likely to involve you in any significant, additional expenses? (Please respond to each item)

	Very Significant	Somewhat Significant	Not Significant	Not Certain
Loss of overtime	[]	[]	[]	[]
Stopping or reducing paid part-time work	[]	[]	[]	[]
Cost of babysitting	[]	[]	[]	[]
Cost of books and materials	[]	[]	[]	[]
Traveling	[]	[]	[]	[]
Other _____	[]	[]	[]	[]

26. What are your sources of financing for your SUN course? (Please respond to each item.)

	Major Source	Minor Source	Not a Source
Full and/or part-time work	[]	[]	[]
Savings	[]	[]	[]
Parental aid	[]	[]	[]
Employer support	[]	[]	[]
Spouse's income	[]	[]	[]
Grants/Scholarships	[]	[]	[]
Loans	[]	[]	[]
Other _____	[]	[]	[]

(please specify)

27. Which of these do you own or have easy access to? (Check all that apply.)

Transportation	[]	Typewriter	[]
Record player	[]	Telephone	[]
Tape recorder (cassette type)	[]	Television	[]
Tape recorder (reel to reel)	[]	None of these	[]
Slide projector/viewer	[]		

28. Do you plan to make any special arrangements to enable you to take a SUN course? (Check all that apply.)

Rearrange working hours/duties	[]
Reorganize time to allow for studying	[]
Arrange for child/baby sitting	[]
Arrange to record missed programs	[]
Turn one room into study/quiet room	[]
Special arrangements to watch TV/bought TV	[]
Other arrangements (write in)	[]

29. What are the most convenient days and times for you to watch television broadcasts and which would you, as far as you can say, find decidedly inconvenient.

Weekdays: Convenient Inconvenient

Do not mind what time []

Before 8:00 a.m.	[]	[]
8:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.	[]	[]
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon	[]	[]
12:00 noon-1:00 p.m.	[]	[]
1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.	[]	[]
4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	[]	[]
5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	[]	[]
6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	[]	[]
7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.	[]	[]
9:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.	[]	[]
10:30 p.m. or later	[]	[]

Weekends:

Do not mind what time []

Before 6:00 a.m.	[]	[]
6:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.	[]	[]
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon	[]	[]
12:00 noon-1:00 p.m.	[]	[]
1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.	[]	[]
4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	[]	[]
5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	[]	[]
6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	[]	[]
7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.	[]	[]
9:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.	[]	[]
10:30 p.m. or later	[]	[]

30. In studying with SUN, which of the following are major concerns for you?

	Major	Minor or None	Don't Know
Work pressures and responsibilities	[]	[]	[]
Domestic interruptions and demands	[]	[]	[]
Lack of personal contact with teachers	[]	[]	[]
Lack of personal contact with other students	[]	[]	[]
Self-discipline, getting down to regular work	[]	[]	[]
Academic and learning problems: starting to study again, new methods, concentration, memory, etc.	[]	[]	[]
Program pace, keeping up with the SUN schedule	[]	[]	[]
Lack of time and energy	[]	[]	[]
Personal disability	[]	[]	[]
Obtaining books and materials	[]	[]	[]
Other _____	[]	[]	[]

31. List the greatest concern you have in studying with SUN.

32. Do you have space available at home where you can study quietly if you wish? (Check one)

Yes, at all times	[]	No, plan to study at	[]
Yes, in daytime only	[]	work	[]
Yes, but only after children have gone to bed	[]	No, plan to study at Learning Center	[]
No, plan to study at public library	[]	No, don't know yet where I will study	[]
		Other plans	[]

33. Given your other responsibilities (job, marriage, family etc.), how difficult do you think it will be for you to "keep up" with the SUN course(s)? (Check one)

I can do what I have to do rather easily	[]
Taking a SUN course(s) will require some effort	[]
Taking a SUN course(s) will require a very substantial effort	[]
I am concerned I may not be able to do all the things planned	[]
Other _____	[]

(Please specify)

34. How do your family, friends and employer feel about your enrollment in SUN? (Check one for each group)

	Family	Friends	Employer
Strongly encouraging	[]	[]	[]
Somewhat encouraging	[]	[]	[]
Neutral	[]	[]	[]
Somewhat discouraging	[]	[]	[]
Strongly discouraging	[]	[]	[]
Don't know	[]	[]	[]

VI. GOALS

What are your immediate and long-range goals for yourself? Please consider these questions carefully since your answers will be used as guides to future roles SUN might play in helping its students.

35. How important is it that you achieve the following goals by studying with SUN? (Please respond to each item)

Not Somewhat Very
Important Important Important

- | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| a. To increase my appreciation of art, music, literature and other cultural expressions. | [] | [] | [] |
| b. To discover my vocational interests | [] | [] | [] |
| c. To develop a new career | [] | [] | [] |
| d. To become involved in social and political concerns. | [] | [] | [] |
| e. To attain specific skills that will be useful on a job. | [] | [] | [] |
| f. To increase my awareness of different philosophies, cultures and ways of life. | [] | [] | [] |
| g. To improve my chances of making more money. | [] | [] | [] |
| h. To obtain a degree which is required for my present or future job. | [] | [] | [] |
| i. To learn how to participate effectively as a citizen in my community. | [] | [] | [] |
| j. To develop an understanding and an appreciation of science and technology. | [] | [] | [] |
| k. To improve my self-image | [] | [] | [] |
| l. Simply, to learn. | [] | [] | [] |
| m. To improve my professional status | [] | [] | [] |
| n. To increase my confidence to undertake learning projects. | [] | [] | [] |
| o. To use leisure time creatively. | [] | [] | [] |
| p. Other _____ | [] | [] | [] |

(Please specify)

36. Which one of the goals in question 35 is the most important to you?

37. What is the highest academic degree you hope to obtain? (Check one)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| None | [] |
| Associate degree (A. A. or equivalent) | [] |
| Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, etc.) | [] |
| Master's degree (MA, MS, etc.) | [] |
| Doctor of philosophy or education (PhD or EdD) | [] |
| Medical degree (MD, DDS, etc.) | [] |
| Law degree (LL. B., JD) | [] |
| Theological degree | [] |
| Other _____ | [] |

(Please specify)

VII. ENROLLMENT

In order to plan future courses and reach new students, we need to know more about how you found out about SUN and why you chose to take a SUN course.

38. Is anyone else in your family presently registered as a student in SUN?

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| Husband/wife | [] | Brother/sister | [] |
| Mother/father | [] | Other relatives | [] |
| Son/daughter | [] | | |

39. How did you find out about SUN? (Check as many as are applicable)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| From a SUN student | [] |
| From someone who works for SUN | [] |
| From someone who works for another college or university | [] |
| From a newspaper advertisement | [] |
| From a news article in a newspaper | [] |
| From a television advertisement | [] |
| From a television program | [] |
| From a radio advertisement | [] |
| From a radio program | [] |

- | | |
|---|-----|
| From reading a SUN brochure | [] |
| From a SUN poster | [] |
| From a high school or college counselor | [] |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| From my employer | [] |
| From a friend or family member | [] |
| Other _____ | [] |

(Please specify)

40. Please indicate the importance of the following influences on your enrolling with SUN.

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The good reputation of University of Nebraska	[]	[]	[]
I have friends at SUN	[]	[]	[]
Another SUN student recommended it	[]	[]	[]
The independence allowed by SUN	[]	[]	[]
My employer suggested I take SUN courses	[]	[]	[]
I can work as well as study with SUN	[]	[]	[]
A counselor recommended SUN	[]	[]	[]
A member of my family suggested I enroll	[]	[]	[]
I wanted to live at home while attending college	[]	[]	[]
Other _____ (Please specify)	[]	[]	[]

Please write any comments you may have.

41. Which of the above information affected your enrollment the MOST?

Thank you very much for responding to this questionnaire.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE COURSE ON
THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE GREAT PLAINS

David C. Forman

With Major Contributions By

Jane Cashell
Richard Lent

This paper is a part of a symposium, "Rhetoric and Practice: Needs Assessment in a Major Development Effort," given at the 1975 AERA Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. This paper is best considered as part of the overall symposium package.

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The first man among them to stand on the edge of the Great Plains saw farther over land than he had ever seen before. There is something about the heart of the continent that resides always in the end of vision, some essence of the sun and wind.

N. Scott Momaday

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the activities of a team of researchers from the State University of Nebraska (SUN) who participated in a needs assessment during a five day period in July 1974. The report, itself, will make frequent reference to SUN, the course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains, and the cultural history course development team; and it is necessary at this time to briefly describe these entities. Following this discussion, the general outline of the report will be presented.

The State University of Nebraska (SUN) is an adult based higher education program of independent study. College level courses, at the sophomore level, are either created or adapted for presentation through a variety of instructional media to students. Students are sent packets of instructional materials which include such items as cassette tapes, slide-tape presentations, workbooks, a course syllabus, specially designed books of readings and evaluation instruments. These course materials are supplemented with instruction presented on television, radio or through newspaper modules. To assist learners, several learning centers are located throughout Nebraska; these centers are staffed with academic counselors and they contain all the instructional materials and resources for each SUN course. By making higher education available to people other than those who are able to attend regular college campuses, SUN is hoping to address needs and interests of people in the community that are not presently being met. SUN's curriculum includes normal college liberal arts courses as well as courses especially suited for the occupational and enrichment interests of adult learners.

The course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains is being designed for the SUN curriculum. The course itself represents an interdisciplinary approach to regional history, and these characteristics, combined with the

multi-media orientation inherent in the SUN concept, make the course unique. Because of its uniqueness, the course is being completely designed and developed by the SUN staff. There are several primary goals for the cultural history course. The student will be expected to be familiar with knowledge about the Great Plains and its history, people, literature, art, music, geography and identity as a region. The course is also attempting to impart, with the students active participation, a sense of personal understanding and identity that can result from the study of one's heritage. And finally, the course hopes to actively involve students in the process of analyzing and recording history through such means as works of art, community projects, family histories, and oral history interviews.

The course development team is comprised of the group of people primarily responsible for the design of the course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains. Each course team at SUN, including the Cultural History course team, essentially consists of a content specialist, an instructional developer, an evaluator, and a producer. On the cultural history course, these roles were filled by the following people:

Content Specialist	Robert Manley
Instructional Developer	Penny Richardson/Richard Lent
Evaluator	David Forman/Jane Cashell
Producer	Marshall Jamison

Several of these names will appear throughout the report. The needs assessment team was composed of three course team members: Richard Lent, David Forman, and Jane Cashell. In addition to the immediate course team, a panel of ten senior content advisors played an integral role in the design of the course. This panel of ten prominent historians and social scientists met twice during the summer to assist the content specialist and the course team.

The body of this report is devoted to an analysis of the planning process and results of the needs assessment conducted by members of the Humanities course.

The first chapter recounts the plans and preparations made for the needs assessment. Chapter 2 describes the group interview sessions which were held in eight different cities in Nebraska. The information presented in this chapter is primarily gleaned from personal journals kept by each of the three team members and tape recordings of the sessions. The third chapter is devoted to an analysis of the data obtained from a questionnaire given to each session participant. Data are often presented in tabular form to facilitate quick analysis. The next chapter is concerned with a second administration of the questionnaire. A SUN staff member--not connected with the needs assessment--visited the public television review advisory committees in nine cities throughout Nebraska. He administered and collected the questionnaire and these results are compared and contrasted with the first administration of the questionnaire. The last chapter addresses the issue of the worth of the needs assessment. In addition to briefly describing the unintended outcomes of the needs assessment, this chapter is centered around two major questions: What can be learned from a needs assessment? and, How can these data be used in the design and development of courses? As a final note, it should be pointed out that throughout the report a concentrated effort has been made to address practical considerations which might be of use to decision makers and educators engaging in needs assessment.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the needs assessment itself, we should emphasize our meaning of the term 'need' and how we envision the needs assessment process. A need is a desired set of standards or conditions. In terms of the Great Plains course, the desired condition relates to a course that adapts to the needs and interests of potential students--in other words, the need is for an interesting and personally meaningful course. A useful tool in conceptualizing the Assessment process is a phrase that is the basis of the Coffin and Hutchinson needs assessment methodology: 'who needs what as defined by whom?'

In applying this phrase to the Great Plains effort, we find that as previously intimated, the 'who' are our potential students and the 'what' is a personally relevant course. The 'by whom' are a representative sample of possible students. We have, then, assessed prospective students about what they would like to see included in the course. As suggested by the Coffin and Hutchinson phrase, other needs assessments could also be conducted. For example, Henry Steele Commager clearly saw a need to conceive an interdisciplinary course in regional history on the Great Plains. Commager, who wrote the initial proposal funding the design phase of the course and was a member of the Senior content advisors, envisioned multiple audiences for the course including students, the academic community and educational media experts. Another example of needs assessment could include the following elements:

Who: The Students
 What: A personally, meaningful course
 By Whom: Historians, adult educators

The methodologies used for this type of normative (or expert judgment) needs assessment would be different from the interview and survey techniques described within the body of this report.

With this overview of key terms, the contents of the report and a definition of need in mind, we can now examine the planning, process and results of the Humanities team's needs assessment.

PLANNING FOR THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This chapter examines the planning undertaken by the Humanities course team before embarking on the needs assessment activity. In addition to a discussion of the purpose for needs assessment, other topics that will be considered are the questions of: Who should be involved? Which parts of the state should the team visit? When should the meetings with the participants occur? and How should the meetings be conducted? The practical constraints which influenced our decisions on each of these questions will also be described.

The purpose of the needs assessment conducted by the three members of the Humanities course team was to provide information to the course team for the design of the course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains. This information, based on the needs and interest of potential students, would be considered in making decisions on course design along with the viewpoints of the course development team, the content experts and the senior content review panel. Unfortunately, we could not be more specific about our purpose because the course team was unsure of what data the needs assessment could provide and how the data might fit into the design of the course. This lack of specificity was understandable given the general unfocused nature of the course in early July and the fact that SUN had never undertaken a previous needs assessment. In this sense, then, the needs assessment was an exploratory venture that was relatively unencumbered by expectations from course team members and other members of the SUN staff.

In retrospect, this ambiguity of purpose allowed the assessment team to explore a broad range of topics and assessment methods, but it also had some prominent disadvantages. Paramount among these problems was the difficulty encountered in operationalizing the needs assessment and educating the course team and others to the potential relevance and importance of the needs data to

the course development process. The results of the trip will be discussed in greater detail in the last chapter of this report.

The needs assessment team was greatly concerned with 'who' we should be interviewing. The results that we ascertained would certainly reflect the people that we interviewed. The sample could be determined 1) on a random basis, 2) on a representative basis (ranges of age, sex, occupation, and educational background), or 3) because of interest in history. Other options such as meetings of civic groups (Rotary, Lions Club, etc.) were also discussed, but these alternatives were dismissed because it was felt that these civic groups could not present us with the type of information that would be most meaningful at this stage of the needs assessment. After deliberation, the needs team decided to attempt to select a representative group of people who had an interest in history (a combination of reasons 2 and 3). A random sample is more appropriate for an assessment completed earlier in the course design phase when the general questions of types of courses and course goals should be asked. We wanted to become familiar with many of the types of students who might be motivated to take the course and therefore we placed priority on interest in history while trying to secure a representation of ages, occupations and educational level.

The Humanities Team asked Bob Manley, the content advisor, to supply us with a list of people throughout the state who might be interested in meeting with us and entering into conversation about SUN, the course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains and the subject of local history. On July 3rd, the team started making phone calls and arranging the trip. Practical constraints started to surface immediately:

a) while it would have been valuable to cover all areas of the state (because many appear to have unique characteristics) the team had to settle on a manageable trip of four to five days

b) many people were away on summer vacations and this hampered arrangements

c) some contact people in the communities we called were willing to call other people and make arrangements for our meeting while others were not. Consequently, the team ended up making numerous phone calls to secondary and tertiary contacts which often proved difficult and fruitless.

Arrangements were made or confirmed almost literally up to the time of departure on July 12. Approximately 50 long distance phone calls were made during this time period and 25 man hours were involved in planning and coordinating the trip. As a result of these phone contacts, the following tentative agenda was planned:

Friday	7:30 p.m.	Broken Bow	Population	3,734
Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Stapleton		311
Saturday	4:00 p.m.	McCook		8,285
Sunday	2:00 p.m.	North Platte		19,447
Monday	12:00	Hastings		23,580
Monday	7:30 p.m.	Minden		2,669
Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	Ashland		2,176
Wednesday	11:30 a.m.	Osceola		923
Wednesday	2:00 p.m.	Stromsberg		1,125

In addition to these sessions, one was also held in South Lincoln on the preceding Monday night and six school teachers were in attendance. Early Thursday morning, July 11, the Broken Bow session was cancelled because too many people were away for vacation.

After it became apparent that the needs assessment team could not cover the entire state, we had tentatively decided to take possibly two more trips: one to Omaha and the Nebraska City area; and one to the Scottsbluff and Chadron region. By completing these two other trips, four socio-economic cross sections

(urban threshold, transitional community, agricultural community and ranching community) would be amply covered and we would have a breadth of data which might be useful to the course team and other SUN personnel. Because these other trips were envisaged, the Needs Team did not pay particular attention to the 'type' or 'category' of city being contacted for this assessment. The general route was mapped out and towns were picked because of a) being on Bob Manley's list and then b) propinquity to our route.

Our thoughts before departing about how these sessions would be conducted were somewhat uncertain. We just didn't know what to expect either from the people or our ability to respond to them. The fact the team was comprised of one person from California, one from Delaware and one from Massachusetts did not alleviate these uncertainties. But inspite of these ambiguities, we had several notions about how we would attempt to proceed with the interview and questionnaire presentations. The three people on the Needs Assessment Team basically assumed three different roles: group discussant; observer/evaluator and recorder/note taker. It was our intention to rotate these roles so we could see the process from different perspectives. We also decided to tape the sessions whenever possible and take pictures of the proceedings with the participants permission. The tapes and pictures were not only intended to trigger our memory and sharpen our perceptions of the meeting, but also to document the experience.

Our basic approach to the interview sessions was grounded in the belief we should talk to the people on their terms and interest. By building the level of trust among us, we thought we could discuss matters which were less interesting to them but had greater pertinence to us. We believed the interview session required both a degree of flexibility and control: flexibility to respond to the interests of the people and control to insure the groups received the same information from us and we received the information we needed. A journal entry by one of the participants recounts another version of this expectation.

"Originally, we hoped that the sessions might be comparable enough and controllable enough that we would be able to observe the effects of different combinations of the variables on session effectiveness. However, we did have some suspicions that each session might be so different that we would have to play each one by ear."

THE INTERVIEW SESSIONS AND THE TRIP

This section of the report will describe each of the sessions in the needs assessment trip. In addition to relating such information as how many people were in attendance, this description also attempts to portray the atmosphere and character of each meeting.

Stapleton

Stapleton is a small community in the sandhills area of Nebraska. The town has a population of 311, and it is the county seat as well as being virtually the only town in Logan County. The people of Logan County are predominantly farmers and ranchers; the ranches are primarily located in the sandhills whereas the farms are usually found in the lowlands and river valleys. The meeting was scheduled for ten o'clock on Saturday morning, July 13; and we were uncertain about the number of people who might appear because this was a session in which one local person, Mary Brosius, made arrangements and contacted people. Twelve people showed up (more than we had anticipated), and they brought iced tea, coffee and cookies with them. We met around a long table in a room of the county courthouse which seemed to be often used for town meetings. All but one member of the group was female, and although there is a spread of ages (17-81) the group as a whole was mostly composed of elderly people. The people knew each other quite well and were very comfortable in each other's company; this comfortableness became obvious in the meeting itself because, at many times, there was a high level of personal interaction and levity. Another aspect of the meeting which was interesting to note was several people brought along pictures of documents pertaining to history. These artifacts proved to be very

useful because they were an immediate focal point for discussion although the team did not capitalize on these materials to the extent we should have.

The meeting itself had a rather uneven beginning. People drifted in slowly and we chatted individually until the materials on SUN were passed out. Many of the participants, particularly the older people, were not really interested in the literature and no one seemed to be particularly engrossed. The plan for this session was the participants would fill out pages 1, 2 and 3 of the questionnaires, have a discussion on local history, and then fill out the remainder of the questionnaire. The central idea behind this procedure was the first three pages would serve to orient the participants to our purpose as well as to obtain a source of data uninfluenced by discussion. In short, this procedure did not work because people finished at different times and some people, especially the elderly people, were not really interested in completing the questionnaire at all. Consequently, we had to resume the discussion when some people had not finished their questionnaire because, otherwise, we might have lost the interest of the majority of the participants. It was almost as if the questionnaire and SUN materials obtrusively intruded on our meeting; a journal entry documents this sentiment: "Gradually, the materials were forgotten and we got into an active discussion of the town's history and development--including the original shift from Gandy due to the railroad spur at Stapleton in 1912."

The discussion itself revolved around local history, more recent developments and the ecology of the area. The people had a number of keen insights into each of these subjects including:

- a) the impact of the land on people
- b) the importance of cultural activities to the early settlers
- c) the reasons for the decline of Gandy and the rise of Stapleton
- d) the economic and political situation of their community in relation to the rest of Nebraska
- e) the decline in the importance of a university education vis-a-vis finishing high school or going to technical/vocational school
- f) the richness and variety of the land and other resources within the area.

But perhaps the point that emerged most clearly from the Stapleton session was the genuine feeling they had for each other and for us and the close sense of community that they displayed. At several times during the discussion, they mentioned they considered the warmth of the people to be the truly outstanding characteristic of the area. This characteristic became evident to us during the course of our two hour meeting; laughter frequently punctuated the discussion, and we all seemed to be the closest of friends.

At one point during our conversation, we asked for a rough indication of who might be interested in taking the class. Of the six or seven people who expressed an interest, only one, the 17 year old high school student, thought she would take the course for credit. Although this figure could reflect the proclivities of our specific sample, we thought this finding was intriguing. The high school student also raised an interesting point on the credit issue. Evidently, a considerable number of high school seniors attempt to acquire at least some college credit before applying to colleges; she had enrolled at Chadron State during the last summer session for this reason. She was curious to know whether SUN courses could serve this function. We thanked her for her contribution and said we would look into the policy presently being created.

We tried to end the meeting by asking them to fill out the remainder of the questionnaire. This activity again met with mixed results. After collecting our materials and helping to clean up, we accepted the invitation of a lady to drive a few miles outside of town to see both the head of the Loop River and an old sodhouse. We continued to talk about the town and its people during this brief side trip, and we think the people enjoyed showing us these sights just as much as we enjoyed seeing them.

McCook

After a mediocre to abysmal lunch and several hours of driving, we arrived at McCook for a late afternoon meeting. Compared to Stapleton, McCook seemed like a thriving urban metropolis but in reality the town's population is only 8,285. Nevertheless, the business and shopping sections seemed well developed and prosperous. We traveled through a part of the town which had nice, large houses and beautiful, tree shaded streets. The largest attraction in the town is the home of Senator George Norris, which annually draws numerous tourists. Frank Lloyd Wright has built an office building in McCook.

Our meeting was scheduled for the public library and when we arrived about ten minutes early; the library is a fine, new structure. We met in the basement room and although the meeting was scheduled for 4:00 p.m., we did not commence until 4:15 and only three people were in attendance. One of the group members went upstairs to call other members and within fifteen minutes (about 4:30) we had five members in our group. This was a session in which I called all the group members. It is interesting to note the one person who seemed most positive about attending (the curator of the local historical society) did not attend.

One fairly direct manifestation of my calling all the participants is they were not particularly closely acquainted and consequently, the session was somewhat sporadic. The people were clearly not as comfortable with each other as

were the members of the Stapleton contingent. Other factors which might have contributed to the more reserved atmosphere of this session were:

- 1) Only one of the participants had grown up in McCook
- 2) Few of the participants were really interested in local history
- 3) The session started late and what continuity we had was broken when the late people arrived.
- 4) The meeting was held at 4:00 o'clock Saturday afternoon which was perhaps not a propitious time

The fact there were only five people rather than twelve meant the session had to be focused on fewer people and perhaps fewer interests. It is also interesting to note no one brought historical articles with them as did the people from Stapleton. Because of all these factors, the discussion on the historical background of McCook did not proceed very well. Only Senator Harsh and Mrs. Herman, the librarian, were able to make substantive contributions in the area of local and country history. The Senator was particularly knowledgeable of the German-American heritage in McCook; he led the movement to establish a German-American Days festival, now in its fifth year. One of the more interesting pieces of information that emerged from this discussion was the impact of the German prisoner of war internment camps near McCook. In addition to the librarian's comments about McCook, she was also able to provide us with valuable information about resources that could be made available to our students in the course. The availability of local resources is a key concern for the course team because it has ramifications for the types of student activities we consider for the course. We continued to pursue the question of resources at the other towns we visited.

The discussion itself focused more on conditions around McCook in the past twenty or thirty years rather than on more distant history. The participants

seemed to be more comfortable with this orientation and among the influences on the town in recent years that were recounted were a) the railroad, b) the Bureau of Reclamation, c) irrigation techniques, d) light industry, and e) Black football players at the local college. After discussing these issues, we handed out the questionnaire and observed a very different reaction than the one previously recorded at Stapleton. A journal entry from one of the team members recalls the reaction to the questionnaire:

"They appeared to be almost eager to get them (and perhaps even relieved) and they completed them very conscientiously. Generally, this group was highly educated--and either fairly recently educated or actively involved in organizations or activities that demanded reading often, writing frequently and the use of certain analytical skills. In any event, the questionnaires were readily accepted."

As envisioned, the questionnaire was finished at different times. After completing the questionnaire, some participants departed but three stayed around to chat informally. This informal session proved to be not only personally enjoyable but also profitable in terms of information provided on course content and structure and local historical resources. A particular point raised during this informal period was whether our course would fulfill the out-of-state teachers requirement for a Nebraska state history course. We obviously were unaware of such a requirement, but we said we would find an answer to the question.

North Platte

We had spent both Friday and Saturday night in North Platte so we were familiar with the town. One of the most striking features of this medium-sized town (population 19,447) is the number of motels and roadside service agencies: Interstate 80, somewhat like the railroad a century before, has had a profound effect on North Platte. The railroad and the large rail yard, however, appear to still occupy a prominent position in the socio-economic fabric of the community.

Another somewhat unique characteristic of North Platte in comparison to Stapleton and McCook is the existence of a tourist attraction: Buffalo Bill Cody's Scout's Rest Ranch. In addition to the grounds and home of Col. William Cody, there is a 5,000 seat arena for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. We were also to discover in the course of the meeting that North Platte has a rather infamous reputation for violence, drinking and other related sundry activities. North Platte, then, was radically different from both Stapleton and McCook in many ways and many of these disparities became more evident to us as the meeting progressed.

Our meeting was called for 2:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon at the Junior College. This was the hardest session to arrange, and we were dubious about the number of people that might be present. Three people had been definitely contacted and a fourth seemed positive and, in fact, intimated that he would bring eight to ten other people with him. Three people showed up as our session began in an empty classroom of the Junior College. The Judge was quite elderly, and he had spent the greater part of his professional life as either the country attorney or judge in North Platte. George LeRoy is the curator of the Buffalo Bill's Scout's Rest Ranch and local radio historian. LeRoy has an incredible reservoir of stories about Buffalo Bill, North Platte and the West in general. The third man, Dick Kimbrough, had a Ph.D. and was a teacher at the Junior College in addition to being a writer; he had also recently moved from California. The judge brought some antlers and an old rifle and LeRoy had several 19th Century newspapers with him.

In spite of the fact that only three people participated, the meeting was very productive. Two of the participants were very familiar with local history and one might even be classified as an expert (although some of his stories seemed to be in the tall tale category). The dynamics of the session were very different from the others we had conducted; our basic task was to keep the curator

on track and not necessarily to stimulate discussion. We also tried to elicit comments from the other two more reticent members. Dick Kimbrough's comments were particularly lucid. His thoughts gave us a valuable perspective we had not previously been exposed to in our meetings; the perspective was of a person recently moved to Nebraska. Kimbrough, for example, challenged the notion, frequently expressed during the trip, that the people were friendlier in the Great Plains. After two full hours of discussion, we distributed the questionnaires and even after that, the discussion intermittently continued.

It was interesting that the North Platte group recognized very quickly that we were not from Nebraska. Many groups were not so attuned to our characteristics and motivations. They were also quite interested to know about SUN and our course in particular. There was general agreement the course would probably be of interest to many people in North Platte. Richard Kimbrough did mention that several people on the Junior College Board of Trustees were concerned that courses would detract from their program. We all agreed this was an issue SUN would have to concern itself with in the near future.

Of the many historical insights that this session produced, perhaps the two most salient were 1) the violence of the West and 2) the impact of the railroads. The Judge and LeRoy recounted numerous stories (some rather sordid) of mob violence and killings. Granted we were a captive audience, but much of what they related seemed to be based in fact. This violence mystique seems to continue (guns can still be worn in North Platte) as a method of settling disputes and telling the good guys from the bad guys. At several times during our session, the following idiom was repeated: the people in North Platte would either do anything for you or shoot you.

Hastings

Hastings and North Platte are roughly the same size (23,580 and 19,447 respectfully) but the towns seemed very different to us. Hastings is less transient and more reliant on business and light industry; it seems to be more of a town and less of a crossroads. Judging from the vitality of the local historical society and the cynosure provided by the "House of Yesterday Museum," Hastings could be a fertile area for our course. Certainly, the town has a surfeit of excellent resources. Voluminous documents have been produced by the historical society, mostly under the authorship of Mrs. Dorothy Creigh. The existence of Hastings College also augurs well for the future of the course in this area. These were all impressions gathered from our observations and conversations with people before our trip, and we were hopeful that our meeting would substantiate them.

In the morning, we had an appointment with Mr. Nelson, the curator of the House of Yesterday. He was away at a city council meeting so we proceeded to walk around the museum. After about an hour, Mr. Nelson had returned so we conducted our meeting, in a peripatetic fashion, while walking around the museum. He had many fascinating stories to relate about Hastings and its early history. One had to do with the way in which people preserved art, music and literature during their life on the Plains. He showed us pictures of the opera houses, notes from the George Elliot reading club, and various other remnants of the era. He also told in a particularly poignant manner how the character and reserve of the people of the Great Plains was formed; two examples of this phenomenon are 1) the farmer working all year long and placing a good portion of his savings in his crops only to see the locusts or drought destroy his year's effort 2) the mother giving birth to seven children only to see five die before the age of six. Another interesting point that he related was the question of what people valued and decided to take along with them on the wagon train.

Mr. Nelson also came to our meeting at noon which was to be in the Clark Hotel over lunch; the dining room was being repaired so we were assigned a special room on the sixth floor. We had initially contacted two people--Robert Hunter of the Tribune and LaVerne Mohlman, president of the historical society--and arrangements were tentatively made for a small lunch gathering. Five people arrived as well as a reporter for the Tribune and evidently our visit was to be written up in the local paper. The format of our meeting had to be drastically revised because of the luncheon setting. For one thing, we could not tape the session because of the chatter and background noise. The questionnaires could also not be completed at the session so we would have to rely on having them mailed to us. It was also very difficult to hold a focused discussion and two mini-sessions emerged from the seating arrangement around the lunch table. The SUN materials were passed out as people first became acquainted, but after this activity the Hastings meeting was completely different from our previous experiences.

The discussions at each end of the table were unique. At one end, the discussion focused on history, local resources, examination of reference materials brought by Mrs. Creigh, programs offered by the local historical society, and the NEH grant they have received to study local ethnic groups. The other discussion revolved around more programmatic issues and concern with the SUN project.

Examples of some of the questions asked at this end of the table were

- 1) How is SUN different from extension courses, correspondence courses and mini-university courses?
- 2) Who is financing SUN and our course?
- 3) Where are the resource centers and how will they assist students?
- 4) Who is the audience for SUN? How do you know?
- 5) How is the needs assessment information to be used?

At times we were almost challenged by the more aggressive members at the one end of the table. We were asked if we were from Nebraska and what we felt about Nebraska history. For a moment or two, we weren't sure who was interviewing who, but the discussion was lively and conducted on a friendly level.

Because we were unable to tape the session, we left the hotel and stopped at a nearby cafe for a cup of coffee and the chance to immediately write down our impressions of the meeting. The three of us did this independently and the congruence among our perceptions was very strong. Several other points that were discussed over lunch at some time during the course of the meeting were:

- 1) the jealousy that exists between the other parts of the state and the Omaha-Lincoln region
- 2) the town people protecting their fellow town brethren
- 3) the growing proportion of Nebraskans traveling to Europe and abroad
- 4) some youth are coming back to Hastings after an initial exodus.

We left the cafe after collecting our impressions feeling it was a good although enervating session for some members of our group. The participants, we believe, had a good time and enjoyed participating in the session.

Minden

Minden is a small town of some 2,700 people in primarily an agricultural community, but it also has the distinction of being the home of Harold Warp. After growing up in Minden, Warp was attracted to Chicago where he made his fortune in plastics. His gift to his hometown is Pioneer Village, Nebraska's largest tourist attraction, and it contains literally thousands of artifacts and memorabilia of frontier days. Certainly, this complex has had a significant impact on the town although it was not readily discernable from the group of people we interviewed. It is very interesting to note, however, that on any given summer Sunday at Pioneer Village, there are a greater number of people roaming around the grounds than there are in the city of Minden.

Our session was called for 7:30 p.m. at the home of Robert Norton, the high school principal. We had called most of the people in this session but unlike McCook, they all seemed to be good friends. There were seven members in this session; three men (banker, businessman and principal) and four ladies who were all housewives. It was obvious to us they were all very proud of Minden and there seemed to be a strong sense of community identity although not as binding as what we observed at Stapleton. One obvious limitation of this meeting was we did not have people who were knowledgeable in local history. This dearth of historical expertise caused us problems in adjusting to the group, but eventually we focused more fully on contemporary history. Two salient points raised in this context were

- 1) the pervasive present and future impact of the irrigation system
- 2) the positive and negative aspects of recruiting industry in the Minden area.

One of the most meaningful periods in the evening was when the history classes of Lucile Cole were remembered. This lady, who was killed in an auto crash one year ago, required her students to write a personal family history. The students prepared for this for two or three years before actually entering the course. Numerous materials and oral history resources were preserved because of this course and townspeople continue to refer to these works. This example has particular pertinence for our course because this is precisely the type of community focus concern we are hopeful of engendering.

One question we asked in most sessions was 'What would you like people from other parts of the country to know about the Great Plains?' In Minden, the response seemed particularly acute in the sense they felt Easterners (more than Westerners) believed that the Plains were a treeless wasteland filled with savages. This same defensiveness pervaded other sessions but it seemed sharper in Minden.

In one sense, Minden was the least informative session (in terms of content), but, in another, it was valuable because they probably represent a significant group of people who will be taking the course. By seeing them in action, we received a better idea about their strengths and weaknesses and how they will be grappling with the course and its activities.

Ashland

Ashland was a beautiful 35 minute drive from Lincoln. The town itself is located almost midway between Lincoln and Omaha and topographically, it appears to be different from the other sections we have been in. It is more fertile and it appears to be nestled in the countryside rather than right out in the middle of the expansive Plains. The town also appears to be more mature or developed than other towns of similar population and size (population 2,176).

Larry Bartek, who had arranged the meeting, was waiting for us in the high school when we arrived shortly before seven. The other people had not yet arrived and so we waited by ourselves for awhile. Soon Mrs. Graham and Earl arrived and we began our discussion. We began as we usually did by handing out the SUN material; this activity usually worked well because it allowed us time for late arriving people. Unfortunately, in this case, several people were so late our strategy backfired.

We began by asking our two participants if they were familiar with local history--Mrs. Graham said she was and so she proved to be. She was in her element as she recounted many stories about Ashland in its early days. Again as in North Platte, much of our role was trying to keep her in focus and bringing out the other members of the group. Eventually, two others joined our session; and even later, Larry also rejoined us. The group dynamics were difficult to balance because the two male teachers were not frequent contributors. The newspaper editor was often ready with a comment or two and his contributions were usually quite

valuable. The editor was skeptical of SUN and the logistics of putting courses and activities over in an interesting manner to the public.

In terms of content, some interesting differences exist between the history of Ashland and other towns we visited. For instance, course content should encompass towns like Ashland that were not as tied to the railroad as many we have visited (or were more frontier melting pots than a concentration of immigrant stock). Likewise when transportation influences are discussed, Ashland or Ashland-like communities could be brought up to illustrate how such things as a hard rock water crossing can serve as a genesis for a town. The phenomenon of decreasing population was raised very clearly in this session. We also seemed to get into a good talk about more contemporary influences on the area. A significant point in this regard is that Ashland is considered to be an agricultural-suburban community. The impact of being placed midway between Lincoln and Omaha was discussed here as was the ramifications of the interstate running close to Ashland. Other areas of content interest such as the way the settlers and the Indians in this area became friends and inter-married were also discussed.

Even with some of the inter-personal problems with this group, the session lasted a long time and we covered a lot of ground. At one point, we asked the participants to estimate the percentage of people who might want to take the course for credit; the figure of 50% credit, 50% non-credit was suggested by one person. We were able to ask people about the types of special interest courses they might be interested in taking. Several suggestions were made:

- 1) A "Backyard Farmer" type course which would perhaps be for both the farmer and the truck garden/flower garden type of person. Probably two separate courses would be involved in this project.
- 2) An art/handicraft course featuring various media and skills--sculpture, painting, etching.

Other suggestions in this area, although from Osceola and Stromsberg:

3) Theater/fine arts culture series--more than just an ETV presentation but explanations given and study allowed.

4) Interior and home decorating ideas--a "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine of the air. This is probably a somewhat crude translation of what she meant but I think it illustrates the need for housepersons to have a creative show which could help them improve their homes.

5) Conservation and Ecology--perhaps two courses here. One could be centered on the vanishing resources of the Great Plains. The newspaper editor in Polk had some valuable ideas about conservation. He admonished us in his own way not to put our courses in little boxes like geology and geography but organize them around topics which are important to the people such as crops. From this focus then one could talk about the ecology in terms of water tables, irrigation systems, rotating crops, etc. These are the types of ideas that SUN has to collect and study. My feeling is that he has a great idea and with refinement, it could turn into an exciting new type of course.

6) The other course stemming from point 5 above might be devoted to the study of the natural flora and fauna of the Plains--an outdoors, nature type course which might focus on the study of animal and plant life in their natural habitat. Camping skills and outdoor life experiences might also be included in such a course.

The Ashland discussion ended with the filling out of the questionnaires. Even though the session was at times a bit awkward because of the ramblings of one member, we think the participants enjoyed themselves and were challenged by the session.

Osceola

We traveled out to Osceola for a noon meeting; the whole town (population 923) is arranged around a square. We met Mrs. Walgren, who organized the meeting,

at the "Record" office and after a leisurely ten or fifteen minute chat, we walked over to the one cafe in town. Our table was placed right in the middle of the cafe and throughout the session many people were coming and going. It was quite noisy and one might say, not exactly the ideal place to hold a working meeting. But the place itself was fascinating because probably the whole town came in or out of there during the noon hour. The meals were hearty and cheap and the waitress took care of the entire place with amazing efficiency. Because of the circumstances, however, we could neither tape nor take pictures of the entire meeting.

Mrs. Walgren had contacted the people at the meeting, and they were all very friendly and open. One very interesting aspect to this meeting was the treatment of the "decline" of a small town. The major indicators of decline we spoke of were the population size and the cultural activities. The town was once relatively flourishing--it supported two opera houses, three hotels and two newspapers. Now there is one weekly newspaper and one hotel that does not serve meals. Several businesses have also just recently failed. Evidently, the major loss of population occurred during the depression when hard agricultural times drove people Westward. The loss of cultural facilities is undoubtedly related to this loss of population, but there are other reasons. Mrs. Walgren pointed out television has played a big role in destroying cultural events in recent times. She repeated this theme several times throughout the session.

In response to the question, what would you like other people to know about the Great Plains, a new and stimulating response was offered. In addition to the themes of the land and friendliness that have been mentioned elsewhere, one lady mentioned the idea of working the land. In other words, how can we convey the farmer and his feeling and labors on the land. What does it mean to work from sun-up to sun-down in the midst of summer? Whatever it means, it is an integral part of this region; it would be a real challenge to attempt to capture this essence on film.

Osceola may be decreasing in size, but its vitality does not seem to be dying. Two cases in point: 1) the town has produced a mammoth town history which is beautifully done. The guiding force behind this weighty tome is Bernie Gissler who uncovered a myriad of resources in his research. Both he and his book would be superlative resources for our future students; and 2) the town is attempting to raise money for a complete face-lifting for the town square. In addition to Bernie, there appears to be a number of other people interested in local history that would either take the course or be willing resource people. The library in Osceola is supposed to be very good.

The session at Osceola was rather disjointed because of meeting around the lunch table. As in Hastings, we essentially had two sessions going at each end of the table. We were also forced to give the questionnaires out on departing; hopefully they would return them through the mail. Our last minutes were spent with Bernie; he is a thoroughly engaging fellow and he proved to be of great help to us. His experiences with taping elderly people were not too successful and he had some valuable cautions in this regard. Bernie also made slides of old pictures and he has offered to send us these in the mail.

The people in Osceola were very helpful, and they reminded us of the people in Stapleton. It was a good session for a variety of reasons.

Stromsburg

Stromsburg was unique for two reasons: 1) we were going to speak with just one person and 2) this is the first real ethnic community we have visited (the Swedish capital of Nebraska). The single person interview session worked well because Mr. Wilhelms was ready to flow with our questions. He answered them well and sprinkled in many of his own ideas and concerns. Obviously, this method of interviewing one person would flop if the person was not helpful. There are other advantages and disadvantages of such an approach. The problem of

the interview reflecting a single person's biases is obvious but then a selected group is also likely to reflect certain shared biases. What seems to be more important than the number of people involved in the group are the characteristics of the people in terms of such features as farsightedness, empathy and experience in the community. A benefit of a single interview is the fact the participant may be more candid than if he were in a group. This came out during our session with Editor Wilhelms. He was willing, for instance, to talk about some of the biases and prejudices of first generation Swedes, whereas he probably would have refrained from saying this in a group setting. It would have been interesting to also have conducted a group interview session in Stromsburg to compare findings. Our feeling is this individual session was valuable and insightful.

The discussion itself provided us with some very useful content on ethnic communities. For one thing, the editor believed the community was slowly losing its heritage; there were visible signs such as the population coming into the area and the dying out of the Swedish language. He very much looked at the course for what it could do for the town in terms of focusing their thoughts on their Swedish heritage. He hoped the course might even attempt to teach the language or at least attempt to preserve many of the local customs that are in danger of atrophy (such as cooking, art, music, carving, and architecture). He believed the town had been greatly enhanced by naming it as the Swedish Capital of Nebraska. The sign on the town outskirts is very large and proudly proclaims this title. He mentioned how other towns concerned with preserving their ethnic identity have not borrowed this appellation of the _____ capital of Nebraska.

The Swedish festival in Stromsberg is a big event. It attracts over 5,000 people and the town has many displays and exhibitions (about one third of the ladies are attired in Swedish dresses). The band plays and everyone has a fine time.

It would appear this festival might be a great resource area for our students or even the course itself. There is also a movement to make the buildings around the square more Swedish in appearance. Wilhelms' office is in keeping with this style as is the bank and several other buildings. Evidently, this is one of the Stromsberg Headlight (Wilhelms' newspaper) campaigns. He mentioned during the course of the conversation about a dozen people visited Sweden this past year. Evidently, this is about a typical number. These people could be excellent resource people for the course.

There was some anti-farmer feeling in this session; it was interesting because it was more vocal in this session than in any other. It perhaps may have been due to a few run-ins with powerful local farmers but in any case this sentiment was expressed. Both the editor of the Polk newspaper and Mr. Wilhelms uttered this feeling.

Stromsberg, up until four years ago, was 82% Swedish but now this common strand is less prominent. But the town is growing (albeit in the non-Swedish population) although there are reservations about this growth. People do not want it to grow too fast; in this vein it was interesting to hear of York being referred to as a big town. The people of Stromsburg like their small town and they appear to want to keep it this way.

Summary and Recommendations

One of the most immediate impressions we had during and after the trip was that each session was unique. If each session can be envisioned as being composed of such characteristics as time of meeting, place of meeting, setting of meeting, planning arrangements for the meeting, number and age of participants, educational and occupational background of participants, participants knowledge of history, level of group interaction and friendliness within the

group, then it appears that no two sessions had even as many as three characteristics alike. Because each session had so many distinctive features, our approach to each meeting varied.

The team did, however, have a set of focus questions which we generally asked at each session. These questions usually elicited good responses from the participants, but at each session we often pursued questions at a different level. In some sessions, we probed answers and examined issues in depth, and in other cases, the questions were only discussed on a general level. Different sets of questions also had more or less impact in the different sessions. In general the questions we posited were about local history, state history, recent developments in local history, the cultural history course in specific, the idea of SUN and attitudes about higher education in general. In Stapleton the questions about local history were fruitful but in Minden a valuable line of inquiry focused around SUN and adult higher education.

To conclude, we would like to offer several practical suggestions to other teams engaging in a similar activity. For the sake of brevity, these recommendations will be given in outline form.

A. In the phone conversations made (or letters sent) to people for the purpose of arranging the meetings, a mutual personal friend is a great benefit. Because most of the session participants knew Bob Manley, we believe they more easily accepted us.

B. The best sessions were arranged by people in the town or community (and not ourselves), but it is imperative the arranger understand both the purposes of the visit as well as the types of people that should be invited.

C. The best sessions seemed to have a good cross section of people; where there were people who had similar interests the sessions were often less productive. A good cross section can be based on age, sex, education and occupation.

D. Two sessions a day is probably the most you can realistically expect to do well.

E. Morning sessions seem very good. Lunches suffer from the problems previously mentioned (i.e., difficult to record and the existence of many fragmented discussions) but they are often pleasant and they do not take prime time away from jobs and other daily activities. Late afternoon sessions seem the worst although this is based on only one experience. Evening sessions have the potential of being productive if they do not drag on interminably.

F. A central meeting place (library, courthouse, YMCA, etc.) is, at least from our experience, preferable to a person's home. It is nice, however, to have refreshments at the meeting place.

G. Especially until SUN is better known, we had good luck emphasizing the fact that SUN is connected to the University of Nebraska and President Varner. These facts seemed to establish its credibility with our audience.

H. A needs assessment team of three people is a good number. A larger number would perhaps be intimidating and a smaller number would probably be less able to record important points and focus the discussion. At least two people are a necessity. It seems advisable at least one person on the team be from Nebraska, but it also is advantageous if one or several team members are from other states. We were able to ask naive but pertinent questions a Nebraskan could perhaps not have asked.

I. Of the three people on the needs team, it is important to have an evaluator and a course designer. Hopefully, the other person would be either the writer or content expert.

J. Keep track of questions that appear to be particularly effective in the interview session. By asking most of these questions in each session, a standard of comparison can be established.

K. After the completion of the interview, each of the team members should try to enter into separate conversations with a small number of the group members.

L. The team members must keep journals or other types of daily records which document the events.

M. Tape recordings and pictures are very useful but the participants must be comfortable with their use.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

The questionnaire is one of the two primary sources of information for the needs assessment. Before presenting the questionnaire data, we intend to briefly discuss the development, format, and focus and content of the questionnaire. Hopefully, this description of the evolution of the questionnaire will elucidate the process of constructing and refining a needs assessment instrument. After these issues have been treated, the questionnaire data will be presented and this will include two complete questionnaires. Follow the presentation and analysis of the data, some concluding remarks will be offered.

The Development of the Questionnaire

The earliest plans for the needs assessment included provisions for both interviews and questionnaire type instruments although it was not initially envisioned both types of activities would be used in the same meeting. As we continued to think about the trip, it became apparent our sessions would be more effective if the interview and questionnaire activities were both conducted at each session. The following reasons were among the most cogent that were considered in making this decision:

- 1) The questionnaire would insure that a set of identical questions would be asked to each participant in every session.
- 2) The questionnaire might establish a good set from which to conduct the interview.
- 3) The interview and the questionnaire would gather different types of data so they would essentially complement each other rather than overlap or duplicate functions.
- 4) The questionnaire could gather important demographic data which is crucial to gain an understanding of the interview responses.
- 5) The questionnaire responses from the interview sessions might be compared with the same questions given in a non-interview context.
- 6) The questionnaire might give the participants a feeling of closure after an interview session which rambled or was otherwise unsatisfactory.

Further, we felt that the participants might enjoy having at least two options for expression in our meetings. In fact, it proved to be that some people flourished in the interviews while others seemed to be timid or otherwise self-restrained. Many of these latter people did excellent jobs on their questionnaires. Therefore, a great many more participants were effectively reached by the needs assessment session because the questionnaire and the interview were jointly administered.

The Format of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire itself went through a number of revisions before it reached its present form. Many of the early questions were judged to be too ambitious and global for use in the questionnaire (e.g., Why should a person study history, or What does 'cultural history' mean). A majority of these global questions were dropped because we felt the larger issues could be more properly handled in the interview sessions. Other technical matters were corrected before this version of the instrument was produced, and the wording and orientation of the questionnaire was reworked in order to be more appealing and logical to our intended audience.

The questionnaire was also developed to contain both open-ended, subjective and closed response type items. This practice of balancing open and closed response items is well supported in the literature on survey research. The essential ingredient in each type of question is to make it explicitly clear what the respondent is to do. The questionnaire, in several cases, uses a five point scale which requires the person to check a response in one of five blocks. One such scale is:

Not		Very
Important		Important

Evidently, this format caused people some difficulty. Perhaps a more appropriate format for gauging importance would be a four or five point checklist such as:

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Moderately Important
- ☐ Somewhat Important
- ☐ Not Important

Three other suggestions about the form of the questionnaires are 1) start the questionnaire with the more straightforward questions and work towards the complex issues, 2) leave space for 'comments' or 'other responses' on the closed response questions, and 3) if possible, alternate the closed and open-ended questions.

The Focus and Content of the Questionnaire

The substance of the questionnaire was of paramount importance to the needs team. We had to decide what we needed to know from the questionnaire. This decision was influenced by the team's previous decision to conduct both the interview and the questionnaire in each session. The questionnaire was designed to confront the more course-related topics whereas the interview could expand on these course issues and pursue topics of specific interest such as local and community history. With the advantage of hindsight, this basic difference in focus still seems appropriate especially because some sessions did not have time to adequately cover course related matters. Consequently, the difference in focus of the interview and the questionnaire allowed the needs assessment team to gather a wide range of data and still be responsive to the interests of the people in the discussion sessions.

Given this course-related emphasis of the questionnaire, the needs team still had to determine the focus of each question. This decision was constrained by the factor of the time at which the needs assessment instruments were administered. At the particular stage of development of the course on "The Cultural History of the Great Plains" some decisions such as general course goals had already been made. On the other hand, production, content, design and evaluation issues

were still being debated to a varying degree during the time period of the needs assessment. In the first case, then, the needs data could be used as a means of testing out decisions that have been previously made; and in the second instance, the needs data can be used by people in their deliberations about the course.

But even with this late start, we believe the information was gathered which would assist the team in designing the course. Question #1 asked the respondents to name places, landmarks and museums which are important to visit in order to gain an understanding of the Great Plains. This question was designed to provide information to the production staff and writer on possible places that could be built into the television shows or filmstrip segments which have special meaning and significance to people.

Question #2 lists 39 topics which probably will be covered in the course (e.g., local history, the church on the plains, immigrants and the plains, etc.) and the respondent is asked to pick the ten topics which interested him most. This question demonstrates which parts of the course are most interesting to people; we thought this information would be potentially very useful for both the course designer and content specialist.

The third question is the previously alluded to question on course goals. While the basic philosophy of the course had been determined by this time, the needs team conjectured that this material on goals would be a) interesting to know and b) also potentially useful even at this late date. The possible use for the goal data was perhaps for the design of the optional modules or interest activities.

Question #4 is content oriented and it was designed to give the person a chance to express his interests and course goals in terms of the content. The question reads: "Are there topics or concerns which you believe are often omitted or insufficiently treated in traditional history classes that should be included

in this course. If there are, could you list them and explain why they should be included." We hoped to get new ideas as well as general interest indices from this question.

The fifth question is related more to SUN in general than to the humanities course in particular. The needs team wanted to ascertain what seemed to be the greatest concerns our potential students had about taking a SUN course. The question asked each person to rate such factors as expense, self doubts and time on a scale indicating the seriousness of the person's reservation. This information presumably would be useful for both the designer and the evaluator.

The question on page 41 seeks to find out what types of projects or course related activities the respondents would be interested to pursue within the framework of the course. This question is similar to the second question which asks for a statement of interest in content areas. The results of these questions were thought to be valuable for both the evaluator and course designer.

The final two questions are the most difficult and complex in the questionnaire. The question asking how should a person be changed as a result of the course is another attempt to have the respondent apply course content to philosophy and goals. The respondent is being asked to describe what the course is supposed to do; and therefore, this question is similar to page 39 objective question on goals, although in this case the person is asked to formulate the goals in his own words.

An emphasis of the course from its inception is the contribution it might make to community building. We were asking ourselves: How can this course be of help to communities in their endeavors to build a stronger community? We started to develop some notions of the role the course had the potential to play in community building, but we thought it proper to put this issue to the people we visited. The content expert, instructional designer and evaluator

were all interested to see what this question would yield in terms of workable suggestions for the course's community building focus.

The Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaires returned from the needs assessment trip are compiled and the data are presented in this section of the report. Before moving on to the tables and figures that summarize the results of the questionnaire, one questionnaire is included in its entirety for the readers examination. This questionnaire was selected randomly from the forty-two collected on the trip.

Hopefully, this questionnaire will help convey a sense for the way in which the questionnaires were answered and the manner in which the answers to one question are reflected throughout the questionnaire. This feeling for the 'wholeness' of the questionnaire is easily lost when one concentrates on the frequency and statistical indicators of total responses.

The data are analyzed in very unidimensional descriptive terms. If resources permitted, the data could be analyzed in much greater depth. The most immediate need from the course team's perspective would be to analyze the responses to each question in terms of demographic categories such as age, educational level and city. On one question this type of analysis was performed and it yielded some interesting results. But in spite of these limitations, the data do at least provide a general profile of certain course related interests and opinions.

Demographic Data

Response Rate:	42 of 48 questionnaires returned and this represents a response rate of 87.5%
Age of Respondents:	Range 17-81 Average Age 47.5

The State University of Nebraska (S-U-N) is asking your cooperation in an effort to develop a course on the cultural history of the Great Plains. We are asking your assistance because of your interest in history and familiarity with the specific subject of the history of Nebraska. S-U-N is the newly established open learning system for higher education, and it is our intention to provide a creative approach to both the development of course content and the method of instruction. Accordingly, we are asking you to take a few minutes of your time to fill out this brief questionnaire. Your responses will form a carefully considered input into the formulation of the course. Thank you.

In order to help us more clearly identify the different types of needs throughout Nebraska, could you please supply us with the following information about yourself.

Sex	Age	Occupation	City
<u>M</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>FARMER</u>	<u>OSGEODA</u>

Highest Grade Completed in School 16

What places, museums, and landmarks are important to visit in order to gain an understanding of the Great Plains?

Pioneer Village, Minden
 John Museum, Grand Island
 Fort Robinson, Crawford

Chimney Rock - Jail House Rock
 Scotts Bluff - Scotts Bluff
 Mitchell Pass - (how about a camp out,
 or simulated wagon trek) conjunction with
 the bicentennial.
 Bertrand Each county could
 make their own
 covered wagon -
 too far out?
 Brownville

The state historical society
 could be helpful on this

Union Pacific to "resurrect" an old train ride across the
 state. The old train ride across the state is a great idea.

The course on the cultural history of the Great Plains will offer a number of multi-media presentations to students about different topics in the history of the Great Plains. The student can elect to take certain topics during the course. From the list of potential topics below, could you identify the TEN topics which would most interest you.

- ☒ State history
- ☒ County history
- ☒ Local history
- ☐ Women in the social and political life of the Plains
- ☒ The church on the Plains
- ☐ Education: Schools and Colleges on the Plains
- ☒ Small Town Life on the Plains
- ☒ The Urban Centers
- ☐ Black Communities in the Plains
- ☐ The Spanish-American and Chicano communities
- ☒ Native American history
- ☒ Immigrants and the Plains
- ☐ Distributing the land: land legislation and the plains
- ☐ The Great Plains cattle industry
- ☒ The small farmer--the family farm on the plains
- ☐ Agricultural technology
- ☒ The railroads and the plains
- ☐ Water laws
- ☐ Highways and transportation on the plains
- ☐ Farm organizations
- ☐ Industrial development of the Plains region
- ☐ Conservation movements -- environmental protection
- ☐ Government and the economic development of the region
- ☒ Law and order on the Plains
- ☐ Evolution of political systems and forms on the plains
- ☐ Famous political leaders of the Plains
- ☐ Political parties in the Plains
- ☐ Third party movements
- ☐ Patterns of local and county politics
- ☐ The immigrant in politics
- ☐ Crucial legislative issues for the Plains region
- ☐ Women and prairie politics
- ☐ The Great Plains in literature
- ☐ Ethnic cultures on the Plains
- ☐ Folklore of the Plains
- ☒ Popular literature and the "real west."
- ☐ Television's image of the Plains
- ☐ Artists of the Plains
- ☐ Music of the Plains

A course in cultural history of the Great Plains could be expected to lead to the following outcomes. Could you please assess the value of these outcomes on the continuum of importance.

COURSE OUTCOMES	Of No Importance					Of Gr Importa
1. Knowledge of events and important people in Great Plains history						X
2. Familiarization with the unifying themes in Great Plains history				X		
3. Appreciation of the major literary and art works produced in the Great Plains				X		
4. Better understanding of the present through a study of history						X
5. Personal understanding of how one's life has been affected by history						X
6. Better understanding of how one's community and/or ethnic group has evolved through history						X
7. Recognition of how history is influenced by the historian's biases, values, and sources		X				
8. Understanding of cultural trends and changes in the growth of Great Plains communities			X			
9. Appreciation for the similarities between the cultural development of the Great Plains and the cultural development of other areas in the United States			X			

Of these nine potential course goals, could you identify the three most important and three least important goals.

1, 4, & 5

7, 8, & 9

Are there topics or concerns which you believe are often omitted or insufficiently treated in traditional history classes that should be included in this course? If there are, could you list them and explain why they should be included.

I feel we have a richer Indian Heritage than people give Nebraska credit. Something that is also generally missed is the family history - the riches and pains of establishing a home, rearing a family; the stories connected with it. Also I would like to see some emphasis on the history of the last 20-30 years. Maybe in talking about 2-3 courses.

Which of the following factors would cause you reservations about taking this class on the Great Plains?

No Reservation Serious Reservation

Media Presentation

		X		
--	--	---	--	--

Grading System

X				
---	--	--	--	--

Expense

	X			
--	---	--	--	--

Time Requirements

			X	
--	--	--	---	--

Ability to Do the Work

X				
---	--	--	--	--

Ability to Discipline Oneself
to do the work

		X		
--	--	---	--	--

What You Will Learn From the Course

X				
---	--	--	--	--

Personal Relationships in the Learning Situation

	X			
--	---	--	--	--

Please comment on these or other reservations that you have about the course.

All one conflict I see is time off my job for field trips (if you are not paid). I also would like the talk to be more. Very.

To what extent would you be interested in participating in any one of the following activities if it were connected with the course?

	Not Interested				Very Interested
Field Trips					X
Interviewing local experts on history, artists, writers, etc.				X	
Interviewing members of different occupations, ethnic groups, etc.			X		
Participating with several other course members on a community history project				X	
Developing a personal history of yourself and your family					X
Participating in a project designed to uncover as many sources as possible that describe a particular event, period or experiences in history; and compare the various accounts for differences and similarities					X
Completing an in-depth study on how and why your own community developed as it did					X
Studying local art, literature, architecture for an understanding of how they reflect the development of an area			X		

Can you suggest other course related activities which might be profitable?

As I had a camp out planned, it would be ideal for really setting the atmosphere. (by burning back etc.) The rattlesnake could be a problem.

How should a person be changed as a result of experiencing the cultural history of the Great Plains?

I feel such a program... would give the student more of an awareness and appreciation for their area and local history. So much of our history is taken for granted (like it was just there) without an understanding how it came about. Such a course should also help to record our great plain history, Nebraska history, and local history by getting it down on paper, through research etc.

I don't really understand what the term "The Great Plains" include.

In what ways can this course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains assist your community in its efforts to foster and strengthen a spirit of community development?

I feel these two questions are more or less synonymous. What the course does for the individual it can also do for a community. To me, the most important thing the course can accomplish is get our area and local history recorded, and make us more aware of it.

Occupation:	Housewife	11
	Rancher/Farmer	2
	Professional	5
	Educator	17
	Businessman	6
	Student	1
Education Level:	Below High School	1
	High School Graduate	5
	Some College	7
	College Graduate	16
	Graduate Work	4
	M.A., M.S.	4
	Ph.D., M.D., LL.B., D.D.S.	3
	Business/Professional	1
Sex of Respondents:	Females	24
	Males	18

ANALYSIS

The people participating in the group sessions were highly educated. This fact appears to be the most significant result in the demographic data. Fully 67% of the questionnaire respondents are college graduates. The large number of educators is also a significant characteristic of the total group. It remains to be seen whether these statistics will approximate a profile of students enrolled in the course on the "Cultural History of the Great Plains" or if our sample was totally unreasonable. Regardless of the answer to this question which at this point is only a matter of conjecture, it is important to be aware of the basic educational, economic, age and sex characteristics of the questionnaire respondents. It also appears that even though the high educational level, etc., may not be consistent with the overall profile of the students enrolling in the course, judging from the interest expressed by the people in our meetings and the eagerness they demonstrated in wanting to take the course, people with these general characteristics would at least form an identifiable subset of the total population.

Question 1: What places, museums and landmarks are important to visit in order to gain an understanding of the Great Plains?

Eighty-two suggestions were generated by this question. The twelve most suggested sources, in descending order, are:

Pioneer Village
 Stuhr Museum
 House of Yesterday
 Fort Robinson
 Chimney Rock
 Scottsbluff Monument
 Fort Kearney
 Morrill Hall
 Massacre Canyon
 Ash Hollow
 Sandhills
 State Historical Society

ANALYSIS

These suggestions are not too surprising because they are the popular attractions in Nebraska. Other suggestions, although they did not receive a great number of responses, seem to have utility for both the production staff and the course design team. Examples of such suggestions are ethnic festivals throughout the Plains, Indian reservations, airplane flight of the Plains, World War II prisoner of war camps, windmills, Homestead Soddy, county courthouses, dairy farm, an old train ride across the prairie, and following the wagon trail route.

Question 2: From the list of potential topics below, could you identify the ten topics which would most interest you?

The list of topics presented in this question contained thirty-nine entries.

- The ten entries receiving the greatest number of responses are

Local History (26)
 Folklore of the Plains (24)
 Small Town Life on the Plains (21)
 Immigrants on the Plains (20)
 State History (18)
 Artists of the Plains (18)
 Law and Order on the Plains (17)
 The Railroads and the Plains (17)
 County History (17)
 The Small Farmer--Family Farm and the Plains (16)

The ten topics which received the least number of responses are:

- Farm Organizations (1)
- The Immigrant in Politics (2)
- The Spanish-American and Chicano Communities (2)
- Government and the Economic Development of the Region (3)
- Third Party Movement (3)
- The Urban Centers (4)
- Black Communities in the Plains (5)
- Conservation Movements--Environmental Protection (5)
- Political Parties in the Plains (5)
- Patterns of Local and County Politics (5)

ANALYSIS

Several themes appear to be reflected in the list of the top ten interest areas, and these themes are the small town farmer, folk culture and high culture of the Plains, and an orientation toward local, county, and state history. The other emphases of Immigrants, Law and Order and the Railroads all seem to be logical considering the types of communities we visited. In the bottom ten interest areas perhaps the themes of politics and ethnic groups not indigenous to the Plains are well represented. Popular contemporary issues such as the history of Blacks and Chicanos and the cities are also heavily represented in the bottom group.

Question 3: This question asked the students to rate the importance of nine possible course goals. A five point scale ranging from No Importance (a value of 1) to Great Importance (a value of 5) was used. The nine goals are listed with the average score on the five point scale.

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Average Score</u>	<u>Rank Order</u>
1. Knowledge of events and important people in the Great Plains history	4.2	2,3
2. Familiarization with the unifying themes in Great Plains history	3.6	8
3. Appreciation of the major literary and art works in the Great Plains	3.8	6
4. Better understanding of the present through a study of history	4.5	1
5. Personal understanding of how one's life has been affected by history	4.1	4,5

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Average Score</u>	<u>Rank Order</u>
6. Better understanding of how one's community and/or ethnic group has evolved through history	4.2	2,3
7. Recognition of how history is influenced by the historian's biases, values, and sources	3.2	9
8. Understanding of cultural trends and changes in the growth of Great Plains communities	4.1	4,5
9. Appreciation for the similarities between the cultural development of the Great Plains and the cultural development of other areas in the United States	3.7	7

The students were then asked to rank the nine goals in terms of the three most important and the three least important goals. These results are as follows (number of responses are in parentheses):

<u>Most Important</u>	<u>Least Important</u>
5 (17)	7 (15)
4 (15)	9 (14)
1 (13)	3 (11)

ANALYSIS

The slight disagreement between the rank order of the average scores and the most important and least important goals is understandable because of the small variability in the average scores. Goal number 7 is both the lowest ranked and least important goal, although goals 2, 9, and 3 are not much higher ranked. Above this group of four goals, the other relationships are not so distinct, but it does appear that the goals 5, 4, 1, and probably 6 are the most important to a great majority of the participants. The importance of these goals reflects two main themes: a) the respondents want to personalize history by understanding how their life and that of their community has been influenced by history and b) the respondents want to learn Great Plains history (i.e., knowledge of important people and events). The goals that are least important (7, 9, 2, and 3) seem to be more academic and abstract than the most important goals.

The distribution of responses on the five point scale of importance provides a measure of variability that the rank averages do not supply. It is interesting to note the two lowest ranked goals (goals 7 and 9) have a greater number of responses in the 'Great Importance' category than do goals 2 and 3. The factor which causes their low average score and ranking is the people that rank these goals very low. In other words, the two lowest goals display more variability than do goals considered to be more important.

As previously discussed, the data could provide many potentially useful insights if it could be analyzed in more depth. Some simple computations from different communities ranked the list of nine plausible course goals as follows:

Rank Order of Course Goals by Community

<u>Goal Number</u>	<u>Ashland</u>	<u>McCook</u>	<u>N. Platte</u>	<u>Stapleton</u>
1. (Knowledge)	8	1	4	3
2. (Themes)	4,5	8,9	2,3	9
3. (Art)	9	3	8	6
4. (Present)	1,2	2	1	1
5. (Personal)	1,2	5,6	2,3	7
6. (Community)	7	4	9	2
7. (Historiography)	4,5	8,9	5,6,7	5
8. (Cultural Trends)	3	5,6	5,6,7	8
9. (U. S. Areas)	6	7	5,6,7	4

Perhaps the safest statement about these data is that numerous differences obtain. Goal number 4 is unique because of its consistent rating. The treatment of goal number 6 seems to typify the diversity among the four communities. The response pattern also seems consistent with the sense of community displayed in the interview sessions; for instance, the people in Stapleton often remarked about the cohesiveness within their community whereas in Ashland and North Platte there was a dearth of community related discussion. In McCook this sense of community appears to be growing because of its recent emphasis on German-American heritage. Logical reasons for the variability across the community in other goals is not so readily available, but the data do illustrate the difference which can exist that is often emasculated by large group-based statistics. The course

design team must be continually apprised of these types of differences so they can build in course options in an attempt to make the course relevant to a greater variety of people.

Question 4: Are there topics or concerns which you believe are often omitted or insufficiently treated in traditional history classes that should be included in this course?

ANALYSIS

Nineteen people (or 45% of the respondents) commented on this question.

The main consensus of the responses is that the human element of history needs to be reaffirmed. Some selected responses to this question are listed below:

How the common people existed.

Myths of the West are taken for the truth frequently because society wants and demands them. This can be seen in literature, on TV, and in the folklore.

The family life and traditions of the Plains Indian. For instance, how did the Indian control the marijuana problem.

There should be more emphasis placed on 20th century!

Remember plain folks--not just a handful of prominent chosen by past historians. They may have been the leaders, but didn't do it by themselves. Explain various terms and objectives that were common to the culture, not ideal or best! Human interest sidelights rather than same text used by every history book written.

Question 5: Which of the following factors would cause you reservations about taking this class on the Great Plains?

The factors are rated on a five point scale with 1 indicating 'no reservation' and 5 indicating 'serious reservation.'

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Average Score</u>	<u>Rank Order</u>
1. Media Presentation	2.0	5
2. Grading System	1.7	7
3. Expense	2.3	3
4. Time Requirements	3.2	1
5. Ability To Do The Work	1.5	8
6. Ability To Discipline Oneself To Do The Work	2.4	2
7. What You Will Learn From The Course	1.9	6
8. Personal Relationships in the Learning Situation	2.2	4

ANALYSIS

The time constraint is definitely the most serious reservation that the respondents have about S-U-N courses, although even this rating does not indicate more than a moderate reservation. It is also interesting to note the least reservation people had about the course was in their ability to actually do the coursework. The low rating of this reservation undoubtedly reflects the highly educated sample of people participating in the interview/questionnaire sessions.

Question 6: To what extent would you be interested in participating in any one of the following activities if it were connected with the course?

The activities are rated on a five point scale from not interested (a value of 1) to very interested (a value of 5). The activities and their ratings are included in the following table.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Average Score</u>
Field Trip	4.2
Interview local experts	4.0
Interview members of different occupations, ethnic groups, etc.	3.5
Group history project	3.8
Develop personal history	3.9
Project to uncover various sources	3.6
In-depth community study	3.8
Study art, literature, etc.	3.4

ANALYSIS

There seems to be a good general interest in participating in course activities. The low priority attached to the study of local art, literature, and architecture is also reflected in the question on course goals where the appreciation of the major literary and art works (course goal #3) also receives a low ranking. It is interesting to observe the two projects probably involving groups, the field trip and the community history project, were rated highly although not really distinguishable from the other activities. Perhaps the respondents did not perceive these activities as possibly adding a new dimension to the course.

The participants were also asked to list other projects which might be profitable and such suggestions as the following were presented.

Music

Possibly observe social needs, improvements and how an individual may relate to and become involved with such activities.

Antiques and origins, designs of machinery and household items--where and why.

I would be interested in doing some physical project recreating architectural structures and experiencing life in them. Possibly a visual project might be accepted as well as a written research project or one that would benefit a whole community. This would maybe be encouraging to some student living in an isolated area.

Question 7: How should a person be changed as a result of experiencing the cultural history of the Great Plains?

ANALYSIS

Thirty respondents (or 71% of the respondents) directed their comments to this rather broad, open-ended question. The main theme of a majority of the responses was that one could gain an appreciation for and pride in one's life through a better understanding of history and cultural tradition. Other ideas often expressed were the course might lead to a greater tolerance for others of different ethnic backgrounds, a better understanding of the environment and a fuller awareness of one's position in the community. Selected responses from this question are included below:

To find out where one fits into the world--in other words, for identity.

A student of cultural history should never "pass cut" of the class. The introduction to the world of discovery surrounding them should be an incentive to more research and lead to the development of an eagerness to learn from everything and everybody around him.

I think this will generate a great pride in our families and heritage.

The sacrifices of pioneers cannot help but humble us when we realize what they endured that we could have it better.

This is a trite question and has no provable value.

He will never again be 100% thrilled by his heritage--the poor settler, not knowing better, who squandered his topsoil, or exterminated the Indian, for instance. He would better understand the fiercely independent outlook of the Plains resident who outlasted all manner of adversities and still came out on top. We should seek, in other words, to achieve appreciation of our forbears but not idolatry.

Question 8: In what ways can this course on the cultural history of the Great Plains assist your community in its efforts to foster and strengthen a spirit of community development.

ANALYSIS

Twenty-two people answered this question (52% of the respondents) and a main theme expressed by many people is summarized in the following excerpted statement: "People will learn more about the area and consequently take more pride and want to contribute to their community." Other selected comments are the following:

It could make more of the younger generation aware of our history and heritage.

I'm not sure it can.

Hopefully, it would help the community realize the need to work together with all elements contained within the community. I would hope it develops a cohesiveness that would help communities focus on the positive strengths.

It could give them something to be proud of--a sense of belonging. With this sense of belonging comes the strengthening of their spirit of the community.

This is a good thesis topic.

AN INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE:
A RE-EXAMINATION OF RESULTS

One week before the needs assessment team embarked on its journey in the state, Ron Hull, the program manager of the Nebraska Educational Television Network, visited nine communities in Nebraska in order to confer with ETV lay advisory panels. The television transmitters for the ETV network are located in these nine communities scattered throughout the state. Ron Hull took questionnaires with him and administered them at nine meetings. The responses from these questionnaires have been tabulated, and they will be presented in summary form. Particular attention will be devoted to the differences between the ETV responses and the needs assessment team responses.

The ETV questionnaires were given in a very different context from the needs assessment sessions. The different contextual situations can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The ETV questionnaires were given out at the beginning of the meeting.
- 2) Only very broad information was given to the ETV group about SUN and the course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains.
- 3) No one could answer questions from the ETV participants about the course or the questionnaire.
- 4) About half of the ETV group took the questionnaire home with them; they planned to mail them to SUN.

These situations contrasted sharply with the activities in the needs assessment meetings where matters were freely discussed and the questionnaires were generally completed at the meeting.

Demographic Data

Thirty-three of 57 questionnaires were returned from the ETV group; this figure represents a response rate of 58%. It is interesting to observe that the average age and range of ages in the two groups are very similar--the ETV group has an average age of 48 while the community survey group averages 47.5 years.

Educational level is also almost exactly similar; in each case, 67% of the participants are college graduates. The major difference between the two groups is the ratio of women to men. The ETV group had a much higher percentage of women (76%) than did the community survey group (57%). There were also less educators in the ETV group than in the community survey group (6 to 17 respectively).

Question 1: What places museums and landmarks are important to visit in order to gain an understanding of the Great Plains?

Of the twelve suggested places, six were duplicates from the community survey group; these six are Stuhr Museum, Pioneer Village, Morrill Hall, Fort Kearney, Fort Robinson, and House of Yesterday museum. The six newly mentioned sites are Eisenhower Museum, Hoover Birthplace, Cather Museum in Red Cloud, Amana Colonies in Iowa, Truman Library and Mt. Rushmore and the Black Hills. A total of 126 places were suggested in the ETV questionnaires.

ANALYSIS

A greater number of sources were generated by the ETV group than the community survey group (126 to 82 respectively). This pattern is fairly consistent throughout the entire questionnaire and the most apparent reason for the greater response from the ETV group is they became interested in the exercise and did not have the opportunity to enter into a discussion about the material. Therefore, they probably were more diligent with the questionnaire than the community group who had already been discussing the subject for 1½ to 2 hours. Another decided difference between the two groups is the more regional Great Plains approach of the ETV group. The orientations given to the two groups probably accounts for this difference. The community survey group concerned themselves with local history and places, whereas the ETV group construed the question more literally so as to encompass the entirety of the Great Plains. Some other suggested places that were recommended by the ETV group are a feedlot, Niehardt Center, wheatlands of Kansas, Frontier Street, Ogallala, Will Rogers Museum in

Claremore, Pony Express station, irrigation systems, declining small towns, and family farmsteads.

Question 2: From the list of potential topics below, could you identify the ten topics which would most interest you?

ETV Trip Top Ten Interest Topics

State History
Great Plains in Literature
Agricultural Technology
Native American History
Artists of the Plains
Ethnic Cultures on the Plains
Education: Schools and Colleges on the Plains
Folklore on the Plains
Music of the Plains
Distributing the Land: Land Legislation and the Plains

ETV Ten Least Mentioned Interest Topics

Local History
The Urban Centers
Third Party Movements
Women and Prairie Politics
Patterns of Local and County Politics
Water Laws
Agricultural Technology
Spanish-American and Chicano Communities
County History
Black Communities in the Plains
The Immigrant in Politics

ANALYSIS

The ETV most interested list is heavily oriented to the arts and high culture; four of the ten interest areas are in the fine arts. In terms of comparison to the needs assessment group, there are four topics which appear on both most interested lists (State History, Artists of the Plains, Folklore on the Plains and the Small Farmer--Family Farm on the Plains) and six topics jointly appear on the least mentioned lists (Urban Centers, Third Party Movements, Patterns of Local and County Politics, Spanish-American and Chicano communities, Black communities in the Plains, and the Immigrant in Politics). The accord between the two independent groups of respondents appears to be, therefore, quite high. It is interesting to note, however, that two topics that appear on the most interested list on the needs

assessment trip are placed on the least interest ETV list. These topics are local history and country history. It is easy to understand why local and country history were rated highly by the needs group because the cynosure of the discussions was local history. The negative reaction from the ETV contingent is more difficult to explain. It is also interesting to recognize that the topic 'Women and Prairie Politics' is in the lowest ranking only for the ETV respondents in spite of the fact that there is a higher percentage of women in the ETV group. As for the needs assessment group, the ten topics which received the least support were principally comprised of topics involved with politics and ethnic groups not primarily involved with settling the Plains.

Question 3: Could you please assess the importance of the following potential course goals?

	ETV		NEEDS TRIP	
	<u>Average Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Average Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>
1. Knowledge of Events and People	4.3	1,2	4.2	2,3
2. Unifying Themes	3.7	6,7	3.6	8
3. Appreciate Art & Literature	4.0	3	3.8	6
4. Understand Present through History	4.3	1,2	4.5	1
5. History's Impact on One's Own Life	3.8	5	4.1	4,5
6. History's Impact on Community or Ethnic Group	3.9	4	4.2	2,3
7. Historiography	3.6	8	3.2	9
8. Cultural Trends & Changes	3.5	9	4.1	4,5
9. Other parts of the U.S.	3.7	6,7	3.7	7

ANALYSIS

The average scores are very closely related although this may be primarily a reflection of the small amount of variability among the ratings for the goals. The range for the ETV trip (4.3 to 3.5) is very small, and if the top and bottom scores are placed aside for the needs trip, the variability in this case is equally miniscule. Even with this variability problem, the rankings between the groups are quite similar. The only noticeable differences are the goals dealing with a) the appreciation of art and literature and b) cultural trends and changes. The difference in the preference for more treatment of the fine arts is consistent

with the focus of the ETV as reflected in other questions. It is difficult to identify a reason for the disparity between the two groups on goal 8.

The listing of the most important and least important goals are also closely commensurate between groups with the exception of a higher rating for the fine arts goal (goal 3) for the ETV contingent and a higher community history rating for the needs assessment group.

	<u>MOST IMPORTANT</u>	<u>LEAST IMPORTANT</u>
	<u>Goal</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>Goal</u> <u>Number</u>
ETV Trip	4,3,1,5	7,9,2,8
Needs Trip	5,4,1,6	7,9,3,2

Question 4: Are these topics or concerns which you believe are often omitted or insufficiently treated in traditional history classes that should be included in this course?

ANALYSIS

The ETV group had proportionately more respondents to this question than did the needs assessment group (45% to 61% respectively). The responses in the ETV questionnaire were somewhat different from the ones expressed in the needs assessment questionnaire. The people in the needs assessment session stressed the human aspect of history whereas the ETV respondents emphasized the importance of examining history in terms of what the events mean to us in our lives today.

Some other selected answers are included below:

Psychological manifestations of historical movements, i.e., "the Pioneer Psychology."

Many traditional history classes fail to rise above a recitation of facts. More analysis of what history means to us is needed.

Up until recently women were slighted, I feel. Historians might include more about outstanding women and their roles in local and state affairs.

It's been a long time since I sat in a history course. But in history as geography, the time and place should be made to come alive--not just people sometime, somewhere.

Question 5: Which of the following factors would cause you reservations about taking this class on the Great Plains?

The responses were placed on a five point scale ranging from 'No reservation' (a value of 1) to 'Serious reservation' (a value of 5). The needs assessment and ETV groups are compared in the following table.

Average Score For Factors Possibly	Reservation	
	<u>ETV</u>	<u>Needs Assessment</u>
Media Presentation	1.9	2.0
Grading System	1.9	1.7
Expense	2.3	2.3
Time Requirements	3.2	3.2
Ability To Do The Work	1.5	1.5
Ability To Discipline Oneself To Do The Work	2.6	2.4
What You Will Learn From The Course	1.9	1.9
Personal Relationships In The Learning Situation	2.2	2.2

ANALYSIS

There is some variability among the factors (a range of 1.5 to 3.2); in fact, this question has produced a greater range of average scores than any similar question contained within the questionnaire. The match between the two groups of respondents is very close, and this close relationship becomes even more meaningful when the range of the data is considered. Perhaps this parity of data reflects commonalities between the two groups such as educational level, age, or occupation; but in any event, at least for this subset of the potential student population, these reservations appear to have similar meaning and significance.

Question 6: To what extent would you be interested in participating in any one of the following activities if it were connected with the course?

The responses were rated on a five point scale ranging from "Not Interested" (a value of 1) to 'Very Interested' (a value of 5).

ANALYSIS

	<u>ETV</u>	<u>Needs Trip</u>
Field Trips	3.9	4.2
Interview Local Experts	3.7	4.0
Interview Members of Different Occupations, Ethnic Groups, etc.	3.4	3.5
Group History Projects	3.6	3.8
Develop Personal History	3.3	3.9
Project to Uncover Various Sources	3.6	3.6
In-Depth Community Survey	3.4	3.8
Study Art, Literature, etc.	3.6	3.4

In both groups, the variability in the responses is very small, and it is difficult to distinguish among many of the potential course activities on the basis of the average scores. Notwithstanding the small range of data, it does appear that most respondents are interested in course related activities; and that of these activities, the field trip and the interviewing of local experts are the most popular options in both groups. The differences in the other areas between the two groups are generally consistent differences which are apparent in other questions: the ETV group rates the fine art activity higher and the needs group attaches more importance to developing personal history.

Question 7: How should a person be changed as a result of experiencing the cultural history of the Great Plains?

ANALYSIS

Thirty of the thirty-three ETV respondents replied to this question (91% of the total number of respondents) whereas 71% of the respondents in the needs trip answered this question. The same general theme pervaded both groups of respondents: the course can engender or strengthen an appreciation for our heritage and an understanding of a person's present role and position in the Plains. Some selected comments to this question from the ETV trip are included below

Should have more understanding of something.

Tolerance and respect for all ethnic groups.

A person should develop an acute awareness of the cultural history of the area which would enable him to actively participate in future community development.

He should feel a very personal link between himself and the Great Plains--should feel a real part of the past and understand his role in the present.

Because we are so close to our own culture, we consider it dull and mundane as compared to other parts of the country which are older. We should have a greater appreciation of our heritage.

Maybe Nebraskans would become more activist or at least understanding of progressive ideas because they would understand their own Populist roots. In many ways Nebraskans are people without a heritage--second generation immigrants tended to deny their European ethnic background and only lately have sought to reclaim it by celebrating Czech, Irish, etc. festivals in small towns. But that isn't enough to satisfy really a lost stage of history. People need to understand the European ideas and traditions that brought them here. For example, my great grandfather was a draft dodger, who ran away from the _____ army. Perhaps with a sharper sense of our heritage, we Nebraskans could then become less obstructionist and more forward looking.

Question 8: In what ways can this course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains assist your community in its efforts to foster and strengthen a spirit of community development?

ANALYSIS

Seventy-nine percent of the respondents from the ETV trip answered this question whereas 52% of the people in the needs assessment session answered the question. The same general theme was characteristic of the responses of both groups: "I believe it would cause more people to take an interest and have pride in the community, and they would be more likely as a result, to enter into projects which would make for a better and more enjoyable community." Other selected responses to this questionnaire are as follows:

I hate to sound so pessimistic, but I don't believe much can be done in this department by TV as long as most people hold such strong materialistic views as they now apparently do.

Knowledge of our history, culture, ethnics can bring us closer together--each in his own home and yet "all together."

It could develop a nucleus of interested and enthusiastic persons who could stimulate others.

Doubtful if any result.

Tie together all the relations of the community, give them a sense of worth and knowledge of the past.

Concluding Reactions to the Questionnaire

The questionnaire fulfills an integral role in needs assessment; as envisioned by the needs assessment team, the questionnaire and the interview sessions complement each other and they each essentially provide different types of information. The questionnaire is basically charged with exploring course-related issues which potentially can have more direct influence on the course. How successful was the questionnaire and did it supply the course design team with useful information? These are questions which we cannot completely answer at this time although there are tangible benefits that the questionnaire has yielded both in the area of course content, course design, and knowledge about the potential students.

The opportunity to give a second large scale administration of the questionnaire provided the SUN staff the chance to assess the consistency of the responses between the ETV and needs assessment groups. In each of the eight questions, the responses were greatly similar. To be certain, many of the questions did not yield sufficient variability of response to adequately determine the significance of the consistency of the responses, but in spite of this limitation, the rank orders and parity of the average scores were commensurate. One plausible hypothesis to explain the consistency between the responses of the two groups is that both groups are comprised of people with similar demographic characteristics. Perhaps one of the safest statements about the data is that it should be further analyzed to include interactional effects between demographic data and the responses to each question. For example, it would be very informative to know how elderly people responded, or how the people intending to take the course for credit respond to those who desire to audit.

THE UTILITY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR SUN COURSE DESIGN

This concluding chapter of the needs assessment report attempts to first inquire into two questions about the needs assessment: What can be learned from a needs assessment? and How can these data be used in the design and development of courses? These questions will be answered on the basis of the data ascertained through the interview and questionnaire techniques on the recently completed needs assessment trip by the Humanities team. The unanticipated outcomes of the needs assessment will then be outlined.

What Can Be Learned from a Needs Assessment?

As the first chapter attests, we were not very clear about what the needs assessment would provide in terms of personal experience and pertinent information. It is perhaps a testament to the complexity of the experience that it is difficult to state exactly what the needs assessment has meant to us both in terms of the personal experience and utility for the course. This caveat is not intended to circumvent the question which is the focus of this discussion, but rather we simply desire to state some of what we learned cannot now be verbalized. Those of us who went on the trip not only have shared a common experience but also a common understanding, and, these shared perceptions have influenced the actions we have taken and the decisions we have made in the course. The instructional developer who was on the needs assessment trip recorded the following comments:

"Although it would be hard to specify the precise nature of these understandings, the writer does feel that the nature (and possible accuracy) of the design judgments he makes on a day-to-day basis has changed markedly since he went on the trip."

However, we realize that an activity such as the needs assessment cannot be justified on this criterion alone. Hard questions should be asked about the usefulness of needs assessment because it does expend numerous resources.

Consequently, we will move from a discussion of the intangible and latent benefits (hopefully, not losing sight of their importance) to a more concrete, practical analysis of the outcomes of needs assessment. The following fifteen derived goals for needs assessment are presented as criteria on which the needs assessment can be evaluated.

Derived Goals For Needs Assessment

1. Determine existing level of interest in the course and particular content areas.
2. Ascertain approximate level of knowledge and understanding in local, state, and regional history.
3. Gather information that could be used for course content.
4. Gather information about the goals of the course.
5. Start to develop notions about alternative content paths.
6. Begin to catalog possible student activities and projects (human and material).
7. Determine the type and level of existing resources not only for course development, but also as possible resources for students when taking the course.
8. Generate and receive feedback on ideas for a course evaluation plan.
9. Identify several people who might be able to assist in the course development process (i.e., in prototype testing as well as course development).
10. Gauge the general interest and acceptance of SUN (what are the major problems).
11. List ideas for other SUN courses.
12. Ascertain level of intra community ties for the purpose of (1) presenting SUN students with the possibility of doing joint community projects (2) trying to assess the unstated goal of the Great Plains course of building up understanding on the part of the student about his community.
13. Build up a library of people and places that might be used in the TV sequence.
14. Familiarize the staff with the Great Plains; familiarize them with possible SUN students--put faces to the market survey statistics.
15. Provide information about SUN to community leaders.

These goals assume different relative importance for the audiences of the needs assessment. The course design team has one set of priorities whereas the SUN staff, funding agencies, and the research and evaluation section may have others. Likewise, the weightings of the possible goals for needs assessment will undoubtedly vary from course to course. These goals have been generated from the experience of the Humanities needs assessment and it is entirely possible that other unique goals obtain for different courses; although we believe the great majority of these goals are pertinent for a needs assessment conducted on virtually any course.

Most of these goals are self-explanatory and the evidence for the basis of their inclusion is contained in the chapters on the interview sessions and the questionnaire administration; however, it may be beneficial to comment on several of the goals which are heretofore sufficiently treated in this report. Goal #3 is interesting because it has only recently emerged. The tapes of the interview sessions and the open-ended questionnaire responses are being used by both the television writer and the audio tape writer as possible sources for pertinent themes and issues as well as for verbatim quotations. It seems especially appropriate that a course on the people of the Great Plains uses the people as a resource for the course, but this goal could also be applied to even more traditional academic courses.

Goal #5 pertains to a fundamental goal of an open learning system which is to provide the student with many options within the body of the course. If these options are properly structured, students have a greater possibility of shaping the course to fit their needs and interests. A course without these options may be hardpressed to keep the interest and attention of SUN's diverse audience. But these options cannot be loosely given, they must be properly structured and consistent with the general themes of the course. The needs

assessment provided the team the opportunity to delve into possible optional content options and to determine their feasibility. Goal #6 is closely related but it deals with student projects instead of the course content. The student will be able to choose among numerous alternative course projects. The course design team used the needs assessment data as a primary means of generating possible student projects.

Goal #9 appears to be a very beneficial unanticipated result of the needs assessment. The needs team has kept in fairly close contact with some of the people they met on their trip. Every participant, at the very least, was written a thank you note. In the past week, TV outlines from the course writer were sent out to fifteen participants in the needs assessment. Responses are still being received and the return rate seems to be quite good (over 50%). We believe these people enjoy continuing their involvement in the course and their comments have been very helpful. The recent experience of the Research and Evaluation section with random anonymous samples and their poor yield is another factor for the use of previously contacted people in the prototype testing process.

Goal #10 was satisfied both by an objective question in the questionnaire and general discussion in the interviews. These results are fully reported in the main body of this report although perhaps three results from this goal warrant reiteration: people are very interested in SUN, the time requirement seems to be their greatest reservation, and a high percentage of people wish to not take the course for credit. Although goal #11 was not a principle concern of the needs assessment team, a list of non-academic or quasi academic potential SUN courses was generated by the participants in the needs assessment.

The community involvement goal is particularly important for the cultural history course because we are attempting to encourage each student to become an active force within his community. We discovered great differences in the sense

of community involvement and, therefore, the course will have to provide a number of options to allow people from different types of communities to participate in group projects. Hopefully, the end result of these group projects and activities will be a strengthening of the spirit of community development and greater awareness of the potential (that is often unrealized) of people working together.

Goal #13 is similar to goal #3 in the sense that the people participating on the needs assessment trip will assume a direct role in the course itself. Examples of tangible evidence of goal #13 are 1) the writers for the audio and TV scripts have conducted an in-person interview with people first encountered through the needs assessment and 2) pictures and tapes made during the needs assessment trip will be directly used in the course. The last two goals, although perhaps not primary concerns of the needs assessment as originally conceived, proved to be tremendously important to the course team and the participants of the discussions. These goals will be discussed further in the treatment of the anticipated outcomes of the needs assessment.

The needs assessment recently conducted by the Humanities course team has provided information in each of the fifteen goal areas. We were more successful in some goals than in others; for example, the team has a good idea of course-related interests (goal #1), but not a strong enough feeling for the evaluation issues (goal #8).

Unanticipated Outcomes of the Needs Assessment

The preponderance of this report has been concerned with needs assessment and the information that it provides for course design and development. This emphasis is well placed because needs assessment must contribute to course design and development but there were other types of results that accrued from the needs assessment experience. These unanticipated outcomes often became exceedingly important for the people, both the participants and the team members,

involved in the needs assessment, and in the long run, its impact on people may at least be equally important to its influence in the abstract on the course design and development process.

The most recognizable unanticipated outcome is the enthusiasm and redefined sense of purpose that the needs assessment gave to the team members. Those of us who participated in the sessions were moved and very much impressed with the people we met. We developed some wonderful friendships and our remembrances of those six days are very rich. This deep personal feeling has, we think, instilled in us the importance of making the course a quality endeavor which is able to impart meaning to the people we met on our trip. Perhaps, we are over-romanticizing the personal benefits of the experience, but regardless, this sense of commitment still exists and its benefits seem incalculable.

In this same vein, the team believed that it was extremely salubrious to descend from the Ivory tower and talk with the people. Even had the personal experiences not been so rich, the team would have benefited from interviewing the participants. The effort to meet with people--if it is done on their terms--is also very meaningful to the people themselves because they have it plainly demonstrated to them that SUN is concerned with ascertaining people's viewpoints. The participants in our sessions may not have left with the same positive (in some cases, exhilarating) feelings that we had, but each one of them, we believe, was convinced that we were interested and concerned with what they had to say.

In the case of the course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains, the trip also served to be an excellent orientation to Nebraska and the Great Plains. This sense of the land as well as the people is especially crucial to acquire for staff members who have had little contact with this region of the country. The needs assessment team was comprised of people from the East and West Coast

(California and New York) and consequently, they gained a great deal in terms of their own personal knowledge and understanding of the Plains.

The needs assessment also served as a general orientation and conscientiousness raising activity for content panel members, SUN staff and foundation members. These audiences asked for material which would enable them to grasp the characteristics and interests of our potential students. According to several senior content advisors, the needs assessment was able to accomplish this task effectively.

CONCLUSION

This report has described the needs assessment undertaken by three members of the Humanities course team. The first chapter discussed the planning and prior arrangements made for the trip. The individual meetings in eight communities throughout Nebraska were then described. Chapters 3 and 4 dealt with the questionnaire used for the needs assessment, and results for two independent offerings of the questionnaire were reported. And finally, the utility of these data for the course development process was described.

The main purpose of this report has been to highlight the results from the interview sessions and the questionnaire; the last chapter did, however, briefly delineate the utility of the needs assessment in the course development process. Separate papers are being developed on the use of the needs assessment by various course team members and these papers are available from the Office of Research and Evaluation on request.

THE UTILITY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT
FOR THE COURSE DESIGNER, CONTENT SPECIALIST, AND EVALUATOR

Jane Cashell
Rick Lent
Penny Richardson

This paper is a part of a symposium, "Rhetoric and Practice: Needs Assessment in a Major Development Effort, given at the 1975 AERA Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. This paper is best considered as part of the overall symposium package.

The Utility of Needs Assessment
for the Course Designer, Content Specialist, and Evaluator

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To determine whether needs assessment data has utility one must look at the use made of it. Did it cause anything to be different? Did people feel or act or decide differently because a thing called "needs assessment" occurred? Many papers on needs assessment offer rationales for needs assessment or focus on methodological how-to's. But few talk about what is done with needs data: how, if at all, it affects anything.

This paper will report on the use made by the evaluator, the course designer, and the content specialist, of needs assessment data gathered in a major curriculum development project. The project involved a team of people with expertise in various academic disciplines; curriculum development and design, evaluation and media production. They were assembled under a planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to design a course called "The Cultural History of the Great Plains" which would be offered through the State University of Nebraska (SUN) and other state university systems. This paper is the companion paper to Forman's "Needs Assessment for the Course on the Cultural History of the Great Plains" (1975), which offers a case study of the actual needs assessment activities and their implications.

The paper is divided in several major sections: a frame of reference, background on the project, and description of the use of needs

data by the instructional designer, the content specialists, and the evaluator.

A Frame of Reference

Needs assessment is considered an important element in most theoretical models for curriculum development and in most visual models for instructional design. Curricular theorists state that the needs of society, of the discipline, and of the student, should determine curricular choices (Tyler, 1950). Instructional development model-builders include a step called "needs assessment information" as an "input" to the step called "defining goals" (Douglas, 1971; Gerlach and Ely, 1971). It is a logical, rational and orderly approach: needs are described/assessed and the resultant philosophical premises/information is used in decision-making.

However, as Walker and others have pointed out, the actual empirical process of curriculum building looks far more like a political process of negotiation and compromise than it does a tidy translation of philosophical premises into practice, as the curriculum theorists would have it, or a linear input-output decision flow, as the instructional development models represent it. Walker goes so far as to suggest that the curriculum field needs to re-conceptualize itself as being a part of educational policy-making (1974). Curriculum builders should admit they are engaged in a political process, and should develop strategies whereby various interest groups may make their case for the curricular emphasis they value.

This perspective seems relevant in a symposium dealing with the rhetoric versus the reality of needs assessment. As we experienced it, the use of needs assessment data by course team members had far more to do with politics, persuasion, platform-building and consciousness raising than it did with "rational decision-making", if there is such a thing. Part of the reason the data was used in this way is doubtless because of the early and formative nature of the entire needs assessment enterprise. But part of it has to do with the very nature of curriculum-building as a political process.

Background on the Project

The idea that there was a "need" for a course on the cultural history of the Great Plains, to use Bradshaw's categories (1972), did not occur entirely in response to "felt", "expressed", or "comparative" needs of SUN learners. Rather the course exemplifies a "normative" need, meaning that the standards for needs are established by experts or groups of which the recipient is not necessarily a part. Representatives of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the State University of Nebraska, through consultation with senior scholar Henry Steele Commager, determined that a course on the regional history was needed, that it should be created and offered to students of Nebraska and later of the entire region, and that SUN's multi-media format would be a good vehicle for such a course.

However, there was also support for this decision in SUN's market survey, which indicated a high interest on the part of students in the humanities areas. "Expressed need" could also be seen in the enthusiasm of many citizens for local history organizations. But the major reasons for deciding to create such a course were based on the rationales of academics and humanists.

The course team consisted of six fulltime members (the resident content specialists, two content researchers, two instructional designers, and an evaluator) with additional assistance and review provided by approximately twenty other people. Team members included people with expertise in various academic disciplines, curriculum development and design, evaluation, and media production. They were assembled under a planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to design a multi-media course called "The Cultural History of the Great Plains" which would be offered by the University of Mid-America (UMA) through the State University of Nebraska (SUN) and other state university systems.

Under the planning grant, the course team was faced with completing a major curriculum development task under a limited time line. The team had few, if any, constraints on what was possible in terms of course design. However, the team was hampered by a general lack of background information. For example, SUN students were the initial target population, but SUN had yet to offer courses and thus had little data on student characteristics. Further, SUN had yet to develop any overall curricular

goals and the original conception of a course on the cultural history of the Great Plains offered little guidance. Finally, both the funding agency and SUN had sets of implicit assumptions regarding the course's academic rigor, interdisciplinary nature, and media possibilities which had to be incorporated with some concerns for the student. Thus the team was faced with the task of designing an innovative course of unknown content for an unspecified audience, and the majority of the work had to be completed in less than four months.

The team's earliest development efforts involved defining the possible range of content topics and instructional activities. They temporarily avoided any serious attempts to define goals or resolve conceptual differences. It was at this point that the needs assessment was conducted. Forman (1975) describes the study's results and these will not be reported again here. However, it should be noted that the needs assessment was basically an exploratory activity involving extended personal discussions between several team members and selected residents of Nebraska communities. Since there were no specific course goals and little information on prospective students, this needs assessment could not follow the rather precise discrepancy models described in the literature (Popham, 1972; Provus, 1972). This study was mainly intended to gather impressions of people's orientation toward course content and to identify any relevant local resources.

The remainder of this paper examines the use made of needs data by three groups who played major roles on the Great Plains Cultural History course development team. First, the utility of needs assessment data for the course designer is discussed. Second, its utility for content specialists is presented. Third, the perspective of the evaluator is examined. Finally, some conclusions about the utility of needs assessment data to a course team are offered.

Utility for the Instructional Designer

Within the team, it was the instructional designer's responsibility to synthesize various people's ideas and translate them into effective instructional design. This meant that the designer was often required to represent student interests on issues related to assessment, curricular options, and instructional style. Generally, he had the final decision on whether a particular proposal or technique made instructional "sense" for the target population. More than any other team member, the designer required good needs assessment information to fulfill his responsibilities.

The needs assessment had two types of outcomes for the project, particularly for the instructional designer: it provided an initial data base, and it engendered subtle shifts in team members' conceptualizations of certain development issues. In the long run, the specific findings played a minor role in shaping the team's efforts. This was partially due to the fact that much of the data became obsolete as the course design evolved. However, this does not mean that the needs assessment was useless. The study seems to have had a direct influence in shaping various aspects

of the curriculum development process. In order to explain this influence, it is necessary to understand some elements of the development process as the team experienced them.

Many authors have developed prescriptive models for the stages or tasks a development project should complete in arriving at its final product. The components of such models often refer to such things as conducting a needs assessment, formulating objectives, or constructing a prototype. However, there is another way to model the development process, and this approach has been outlined by Walker (1970). Walker defines a descriptive, empirical model for the development process which consists of three main elements: platform, deliberation, and design. He describes these elements (1970, pp. 2-3) as follows:

The curriculum developer does not begin with a blank slate. He could not begin without some notion of what is possible and desirable educationally. The system of beliefs and values that the curriculum developer brings to his task and that guides the development of the curriculum I call the curriculum's platform. The word "platform" is meant to suggest both a political platform and something to stand on. The platform includes an idea of what is and a vision of what ought to be, and these guide the curriculum developer in determining what he should do to realize his vision.

In the empirical model the theoretically interesting output of the curriculum development process is not a collection of objects not a list of objectives, not a set of learning experiences, but a set of design decisions. The process by which beliefs and information are used to make these decisions is deliberation. The main operations in curriculum deliberation are formulating decision points, a devising alternative choices at these decision points, considering arguments for and against suggested decision points and decision alternatives, and finally, choosing the most defensible alternative subject to acknowledged constraints.

A curriculum's design, like an automobile's design, is the set of abstract relationships embodied in the designed object. The design is the theoretically significant output of the curriculum development process. When it is embodied in a material form, a curriculum's design, like an automobile's design, presents itself to us as a single entity, a Gestalt, which must then be represented in some systematic way if we are to deal with it analytically. (Author's emphasis)

Using this description of the development process, it is possible to describe the impact of the needs assessment within each of the three elements.

Platform. The platform of a development project is that implicit set of aims, beliefs, and theories held by team members and used by them as they go about judging and justifying various design alternatives. For efficient team functioning, it is important that the team members are working from relatively similar platforms. Much of the confusion and poor communication present during team meetings can be ascribed to platform differences.

During early discussions among members of the cultural history team, it became apparent that various members were working from a variety of personal platforms. This was predictable given the backgrounds of team members. Under this situation, many conscious or unconscious team activities were devoted to the construction of a common platform.

The needs assessment was particularly helpful for team platform building. First, it provided an opportunity for several of the team members who were not familiar with the Great Plains region to gain some understanding of attitudes and lifestyles. Later, when these team members returned and reported their findings, team discussions allowed a sharing of perceptions on a common topic which furthered the development of the team platform. Some of the platform areas that were developed in connection with the needs assessment concerned the educational and regional attitudes of rural Nebraska and the role the cultural history course might play in community life.

Deliberations. The area most obviously affected by the needs assessment was team deliberations. As described earlier, the deliberation process involves identifying decision points, considering alternatives or justifications, and ultimately choosing a particular solution. The effect of the needs assessment was obvious here in the nature and number of alternatives or justifications that were suggested by various team members. The needs assessment provided an experience base from which various elaborations or illustrations could be drawn.

A case could be made that it was inappropriate to work from an information base as narrow and selective as was provided by this needs assessment. However, its utility did not come from being able to cite specific instances, but rather with having some understanding of, and empathy for, the potential student population.

Design. The third element of Walker's model is the curriculum's design: that end product representing a set of decisions, assumptions, and values. By the time the development team arrived at a final course design, many factors, perspectives, and experiences had shaped the deliberation process. In spite of the variety of inputs, it did seem that the design possessed a few areas originally suggested by the needs assessment. For example, the design described the course as being an entry level experience that would act as an enticement for adults to take further course work. This conception grew out of team discussions when the needs assessment was conducted and was not representative of the views of non-team members familiar with the project. Whether or not this conception was solely attributable to the needs assessment would be hard to determine, but it was at least partially responsible.

Throughout the development process the needs assessment seems to have been useful for the designer and other team members as they tried to maintain the student's viewpoint in their decisions. Due to the nature of the development task and the design of the needs assessment, this "student viewpoint" was not based on specific "needs" data. Instead, the needs assessment provided the team with a more general, intuitive understanding of who the students might be, and how they might approach the course content.

Utility for the Content Specialist

Since both the National Endowment for the Humanities and SUN administrators were concerned that the multi-media course be academically sound, they required that all content decisions be made by a Senior Content Advisory Panel of ten eminent Western historians, who met three times with the course development team. The Content Panelists' decisions would be implemented by the course development team--the designers, evaluator, resident content specialist, and content researchers. NEH required further that the content outline and any course materials developed be further revised in the light of critical written comments by the Senior Course Advisors, three eminent humanists who received and critiqued materials from afar.

Thus, it can be seen that there was a heavy emphasis on content specialists as decision-makers for the course. Coffing and Hutchinson (1974) point out that in doing needs analysis, one must differentiate between three concepts: the needer, the need, and the definer. A need is a concept of "what should be" in relation to some needer as defined by someone, the definer. Thus the basic question which frames the inquiry into needs is

"who needs what, as defined by whom?" As the Great Plains team was structured, the authority to be the definer of needs rested largely with the content experts.

This fact was a concern to the designers and evaluators for the course. They feared that in the information vacuum that existed about SUN students since no courses had yet been offered, decisions about the design and content for the course might be made entirely on academic grounds. This was one reason for undertaking the needs assessment trip described in Forman's paper. The group who went out on the needs assessment trip were interested in learning who some potential Cultural History of the Great Plains course students might be, what they needed or were interested in in such a course, as defined by the potential students themselves.

The problem is that for the needs assessment data from students to be utilized, needs assessment itself must be seen as a legitimate enterprise by the content specialist. He must believe that gathering data about the wants and interests and goals of the student should be a significant factor in his content selection. He must have, to use Eisner and Vallance's terminology (1974), a "curricular conception" which values the achievement of personal purpose and which views as an important function of curriculum the providing of satisfactory consummatory experiences for each individual learner. If his conception of curriculum is rooted largely in "academic rationalism" with its focus on the traditional disciplines, then he will be unlikely to be very swayed by the presentation of data on student statements of their own needs and interests.

Most of the Senior Content Advisory Panelists had taught graduate seminars in history for years, had published widely in western history, and had little or no experience in "open education," in "multi-media instruction," or in the use of needs assessment data as an element in the course design process. They were accustomed to thinking in terms of the discipline of history--what should be included in order to do the subject matter justice. Most of them believed student "needs" were defined by the requirements of the discipline rather than by the student himself. This meant that the needs assessment data at first did not seem to play a very large part in the deliberations of the Senior Content Advisory Panel. Their conversations were mainly about content and coverage.

However, on being asked later, several stated that the sense of student interest and enthusiasm they got from reading the needs report had influenced them in difficult-to-specify ways. The open-ended quotes from students and the anecdotal comments had performed something like a "consciousness-raising" function, reminding them they were creating a course, not for their fellow academicians, but for the people of the region.

A second level of content expert was the resident content consultant, who made the day to day decisions about the direction of the course. He was a local historian and community researcher, a man with great feeling for students and what their needs were, based on years of teaching adults, elementary and junior high and high school students, and remedial college students at a small and now defunct college in Nebraska. Whereas the ten Senior Content Advisory Panel members tended to derive the conception of the "needs of students" from the discipline of history or from their fellow

scholars, the local man drew his sense largely from his teaching experience. He also knew people across the state quite well and had a down-to-earth feel for the priorities and expectations of these people. He provided many names of interviewees since he knew people in each small town in Nebraska, and he helped to formulate the questions asked in the needs questionnaire. However, he also was not particularly moved by the needs assessment data when it was presented to him. He felt that his years of experience in the state gave him a much better feel for the needs and interests of citizens than a six-day trip done by three newcomers to the state, and therefore it was not a noticeable input into his thinking.

A third level of content experts who received the needs assessment data were two content researchers, junior staff members who did much of the actual content research and design of instructional materials. As recent students themselves, they believed in the validity of student expression of needs and interests as an input to decisions about course content, but questioned the validity of the needs assessment data because they were unsure it was drawn from a representative sample.

It cannot be concluded that the needs assessment data had no influence on the content specialists involved in developing the course. In spite of their reservations about student input into the defining of needs, and in spite of their dubiousness about the representativeness of the sample, several referred to the needs assessment report when they wished to make a point. Especially quoted were the verbatim summaries of the comments of interviewees, such quotes as "We want history to be personally meaningful" or "History should tell the story of the common man, of the little people."

Apparently, although specific content decisions were not based on information received from the needs assessment data, reading the report gave content specialists a "feel" for the students, and made them more aware of the human recipients of the course.

The Utility for the Evaluator

The evaluator on an educational development team is most closely involved in the design of the needs assessment effort. Issues of professional concern to the evaluator are evident throughout the process of planning, gathering, and reporting the needs data. Since the evaluator is involved in all aspects of the needs assessment process his view of the utility of the resulting data will necessarily be colored by his responsibilities. From his perspective utility will revolve around some of the following issues: the purposes for and the users of the data, the choice of instruments for the data gathering, issues of validity and reliability, and the major task of interpreting and discussing the needs assessment data with the other members of the team.

The purpose of the needs assessment trip was to get a sense of student priorities as input to curriculum planning. Given the time and resources available, the anonymity of the potential student, and the tentative nature of curriculum, the evaluator decided to go with a series of small-scale, loosely structured interviews rather than a market survey. He knew that the main users of the needs assessment data would be course team members themselves. As it turned out the experience of participating in the interviews gave team members a common set of images and experiences

as reference points for their further deliberations. Instead of an abstract entity called "student", team members could call to mind such people as Bernie Gissler of Osceola, Nebraska, with his stooped shoulders, leathery face, and his great pride in having helped write Osceola's Centennial history. They could think of the tiny seventy-five year old librarian in Scottsbluff who told them you weren't a true Plainsman till you liked the feel of sand in your shoes. The evaluator felt that those most integrally involved in the planning and execution of the needs assessment trip were those who benefited most from it. Unfortunately, some users of the needs assessment information, namely the Senior Content Advisory Panel members, were not assembled in time to participate in the framing of the needs assessment questionnaire. The evaluator felt that had they been able to do so, they might have been more receptive to the needs data.

The validity and reliability issue was important to the evaluator. Because only a small and potentially unrepresentative sample of Nebraskans had been contacted, several users of the data wondered how much they could trust it. This response was especially evident in content specialists with background in statistics. The needs assessment effort had never been intended to provide specific and accurate information on narrow questions, but several critics applied the standards of survey research to the endeavor nonetheless. This response made clear the importance--and difficulty--of getting information users to value other evaluation metaphors than the metaphor of numbers.

Interpreting and reporting the needs assessment data with other members of the team presented problems to the evaluator as well. It was done informally, over time, in a variety of conversations, as well as with the publication of a report and a presentation of slides from the trip. Because of the early and limited nature of the effort, the needs assessment team was able to do more in the way of personal portrayals of a few potential students, than in accumulating large amounts of valid and reliable data.

The planning grant ended with the team completing an overall course design including objectives, content outline, and assessment strategies. Later the team would be reformed to construct the instructional materials from this design. At that point, the evaluator feels it would be possible and useful to conduct a more traditional, or discrepancy model, needs assessment to provide specific guidance for the design of instructional materials and assessment instruments. Different kinds of needs assessment information seem to be appropriate at different stages in a development project.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper has tried to describe the role a particular needs assessment study played in a curriculum development project as seen by the instructional designer, the content specialist, and the evaluator. Since the project began without any guidance as to curricular goals or the expected student population, the needs assessment consisted of a series of loosely structured interviews in communities around the state. This alternative to the usual discrepancy needs assessment was seen as useful for providing a common set of images and experiences for the team members. Some specific examples of the needs assessment's impact were described in terms of various elements of the curriculum development process.

A probable question at this point is whether these observations have any validity for other development projects. Butman and Fletcher (1974, p. 48) characterize development as, "a series of attempts to conceptualize the problem, to organize conceptually and operationally the development work, with each new try holding only for a short while until, with further work, a redefined problem and some next steps become clear." If development is thought of as this series of conceptualizations, then perhaps it is appropriate to use different kinds of needs assessment techniques at different points in the conceptualization process. For example, assuming that the early stages of some project consist of rather vague, general conceptualizations, it might be inappropriate to utilize a precise discrepancy approach to needs assessment. However, since the student perspective must be maintained throughout the project's history, some kind of needs assessment should be conducted to obtain this perspective. Thus, for the early stages of a major curriculum development effort, the kind of needs assessment discussed here might be highly useful. Further, it might be appropriate to conduct a series of needs assessments with increasing levels of specificity as the conceptualization process moves toward a final design. In answer to the original question, it seems that the kind of needs assessment discussed here can have similar benefits for other projects, but it will depend on the particular task and information needs of that project.

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